DEAR JUDAS

ROBINSON JEFFERS

Sincerely,
Robinson Jeffers.

DEAR JUDAS

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DEAR JUDAS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY ROBINSON JEFFERS

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DEAR JUDAS

AND OTHER POEMS

THEY have all died and their souls are extinguished;
three remnant images of three passions too violent to vanish
Still haunt the garden; they are nearly unfleshed of time:
but if they were they would be eternal: they are fading.
JESUS:
Cypresses warped by the weight of many hundreds of years, these trees like columns of knobbed stone
Are not the same; remote seedlings of those; it is sure that nineteen hundred years have gone down,
Still I revisit my ancient garden, under the round white stone that shines in the gulf of sky
And in vain, being dead, aches for annihilation, whitening the night.

Now the torches come up to take me.
Dear Judas be comforted at last. The smoky red flares and the scared faces, the servants, the priests
Are all — and even the bit of money under your cloak — imaginary, Judas. You and I remain yet,
Re-dreaming under the moon our passions: but all this play is played out and all these people have been dead
A forest of years. The kiss comes next. What, must I prompt you?

JUDAS: I know you are neither God nor God's son.
But you are *my God.* [*He kisses him.*]
[*The people with torches, and the other people imagined by the speakers, may be thought of as represented by a few maskers moving abstractedly in dumb show.*]
Take him, dog-priests. I have done
the worst thing I can imagine. Oh yes: for the money.
JESUS:
His phantom face is like a flayed man's face. Dear Judas,
turn, dream rather the lion-colored hills
And soft shores of the lake. The locusts I think chirp in
the storm of sunlight. No: it's a shepherd
Flutes in the shade under that rock.
JUDAS: The shepherd is happy:
but Oh happy happy rock.
I think the burly shepherd when he knifes a lamb
Has no thought of its pain; or if he passes along the road-
side the masts of crucified robbers
The Romans have caught, and some look down and cry to
him, from rattling throats in the dry wind, straining
Their hands and feet, it is only a show to gape at. Yet
sometime his own pain will possess him. Oh happy
Happy rock.
JESUS: Since you must dream, dream on from there.
JUDAS: Why, now, what luck have the fishermen drawn
From their blue glaze? A multitude runs to the bank to
meet the boat. My eyes dazzle in the driving
Dust of the sun: Oh, that new prophet.
[*He approaches Jesus again.*] I smell the green-
fringed water across the dust and the smell
Of clothes and sweat.
[*He moves about as if struggling in a crowd.*]
No; I can never attain to him.

JESUS: Whoever is overburdened,
or hopeless, or wretched,
Or lies between the teeth of the world: let him come to me, I am able to save him.
JUDAS: Master: listen!
When I was a child, and ran errands for my father from my father's shop,
A little brown dog followed me home. I fed it and loved it for I was a lonely child, and found it
A nook under the counter to lie at nights. One day it trotted among the stalls of the butchers,
A cleaver was thrown, I carried it home bleeding in my arms. It could neither live nor die and I heard it
Moaning five days and I saw its eyes. Master I am neither sick nor poor nor heavy with sins,
But I am in prison of my pity; the moaning of men and beasts torments me; the pain is not my own pain
From which I come praying for deliverance.
JESUS: To other men I say *Be merciful,* to you alone
Be cruel. Life is not to be lived without some balance.
JUDAS: I knew that you had no power to save me.
JESUS: Come back,
For I have the power. Your name is Judas Iscariot, I have long known you. Dear Judas, does it make you glad
To see men joyful? To watch them feasting or laughing or fine with drunkenness?
JUDAS: Master: I don't know why,
But I am never joyful to see that. Certainly I'm not grieved; but the others' joy is not mine,
Only their pain. My heart is lonely; I groan for their pain.

JESUS: You have then only the night side of love.
Be with me Judas, and I will teach you to love by day
and by night. Peter: this is Judas Iscariot.
John: this is Judas, he will be with us. He is not poor;
and he is the son of a careful shopkeeper.
We need some one with wit to care for our pennies, they're
always dripping away, and the little almsgivings,
So, Peter, give him the purse to carry. It is no burden.
Come, children. Dear Judas, come.

[*Jesus and Judas walk together among the trees at the back of the garden. A woman of fifty, tall and lean, with a passion-worn proud Jewish face, is entering. She does not see the others nor they her.*]

THE WOMAN:
Never look down, stone trees.
I am only a poor half-crazed old woman
That come and sit in the grove after dark,
Too old and poor for any one to do me harm.
It is true that I'm one
Who has known great and bitter occasions.
Oh garden that the glory from my body haunted,
The shining that came forth from between my thighs . . .
Is gone: past the flower and the fall
I sit and sing a cracked song.

[*She sits on a stone in the white moonlight.*]

I bid you fishermen mending brown nets
On the white sand,
I bid you beware of the net, fishermen.
You never can see it,
It flies through the white air and we all are snapped in it.
No, but look round you.
You see men walking and they seem to be free,
But look at the faces, they're caught.
There was never a man cut himself loose.

. . . That's true but comfortless.
[*She sits on the left; Jesus and Judas come forward on the right.*]
Nor dead in their graves are not free,
The mistletoe root-threads
In the wood of the oak of the earth
Are a net, are a net.
JESUS:
They're kind people in the quiet dwellings of Bethany.
Their faces reflect
My Father's face.
JUDAS: Master. Master, we hear you sometimes
say *our Father;* and at other times
You say *my Father.*
JESUS [*trembling*]: Do you dare?
Who appointed Iscariot . . . I am not angry, I see that
you ask in honor, I will not hide my glory
From those I love. It is trumpeted by ten thousand in
heaven. Yet even from my own heart in my youth
This terrible dark and shining mystery was hidden.
I learned that the carpenter was not my father. Ah, Judas,
you're tender-hearted, you'd have pitied the torture
And dark and burning fire of my days then. What could
I think? Not to impute against my own source
An impossible shame. . . . I loathed my life, I was taken
in a net. It drove me into the desert mountains,
Where, after I had fasted beyond the moon's ring, until
my spirit was fluttering to leave the body, I then
Remembered the prophecies and heard voices from heaven.
When I returned I asked her, *Was God my father?*
She wept and answered that He was my father. Also
when John in Jordan baptized me a voice declared it
In thunder from the clear sky. It was heard by many,
though now they are scattered. . . . I blame my mother.

She sinned, hoarding her knowledge in her heart's treasury.
Truly the torment of those days of my ignorance
Never has healed.

JUDAS: Master, we know that you are God's son.
Master, you are changed; the warm happiness
Seems not to radiate from your face as before.

JESUS: I feel my
immeasurable height above men.
My heart is lonely. The sun has risen behind us; let us go on.

JUDAS: Our black shadows that move
Immeasurably stretched on the white road, they seem to reach even to Jerusalem, trouble my soul.
I wonder whether the evil that we reject from our hearts is not destroyed but goes blackening forth
To infest others?

JESUS: You are too scrupulous. Look how the city among the beautiful awakening hills
Shines by itself in the morning clearness, a jewel washed with new milk.

JUDAS: Son of God, let me go back.
I am not prepared. I dread the shining like the shining of paradise.

[*Jesus goes on; Judas returns and sees the woman. He takes a coin from the purse and drops it into her lap, and says:*]

Why did you not cry out, mother,
To our Lord when he passed? He is altogether devoted to saving the helpless.

THE WOMAN: Eh? Do you still have saviors?
This one does wisely to walk at night. The surest-caught fish twists in the net and babbles to the others,
The cords cutting his gills, *I have come to save you.*

JUDAS: It is not night but
the pearl of morning, and the savior
Is the son of God. [*The woman shudders and is silent.*]
I say that the living God is his father.
THE WOMAN: I have this
comfort: we are caught in the net,
And the monsters of our sin are not our own monsters, but
the cords drawing.
JUDAS: He has come to forgive sins,
Though they were monstrous.
THE WOMAN: This is the night after the day;
black and silver dream the stark trees;
And now that some other woman is damned is nothing to
me.
JUDAS: As if this
withered beggar-woman
Were incarnate Night found sitting by the wayside, she
throws . . . you throw magical darkness over my eyes,
So that I seem standing at midnight in a dreary garden.
Good God, if one remembers the future . . .
That would be frightful.
THE WOMAN: Wee wanton brawler
Pommeling the breast,
Baby if it's shrunken,
Whose lips but yours?
I Night am your mother,
Grow tall, wee bird,
And watch your shadow
Pointing you home.
Do you begin to remember the future? Then we
must dream our dreams hastily.
Life grows transparent: what's left us but to light the
torches of violence, to line it visible with fire?

But though you scream with pain, remember you're only a shadow.

[*She peers up at his face.*]

Stand into the moon. You are the one

Who wanted to be more merciful than mercy. Well, you shall go where the net draws you. I Night the Mother

Watching the right abortions pour from my womb,

Gods, men, and the stars and Cæsar,

Receive them with kindness when they stream home.

Listen, Judas, for this is your dream. Your Lord has raised

A dead man out of the grave, a man who'd begun rotting. Came up when he called. This witnessed miracle

Flying on all winds in the city and suburbs, his name begins at length to be known widely and the people

Believe, they flock to hear him, his innocent heart is exalted: so that he dreams more than a prophet's

Glory: a great king's. His wisdom's not of this world. He says in his heart, "The city fills for the passover,

The people know me, and I shall go up in triumph and the trumpets will blow. When all the folk as one man

Rise in the shining honor of righteousness: the Romans will be ashamed and respect them, and the prophet-killer

Herod will flee. The power of the people, sudden and erect and resolute, I trust my people."

JUDAS: Dear Master,

Too many have made rebellions before: they are drowned in blood.

THE WOMAN: He tells you that this one will not be blotted,

Not with one drop, Jew's nor Roman's nor a slave's; we are many, they few; we shall be merciful; a kingdom

Of peace and mercy.

JUDAS [*turning from her, throwing out his hand to re-*

strain some imaginary person whom he sees as present]:
No, Peter. No! That was too cruel.
THE WOMAN: His dream skips over to an easier pity.
He cannot bear this progress up to Jerusalem.
JUDAS: Peter has flung a stone and has broken the hawk's wing.
The trustful hawk that perched in the fig-tree: now it will never again rejoice in the blowing air
And blue spaces, but trail pain till it starves. Its wound saves many sparrows? I know it. Oh Simon
Well called the Stone: what a net of cruelty
Life gasps in, inextricably involved; so that I know not what to pray for but annihilation
For a blessing on life. The bird's pain's nothing, though it grinds in my heart; all the groaning world, Simon.
Flogged slaves and tortured criminals, and bitter deaths of the innocent. Who created it? Who can endure it? Does no one,
Not even our Lord, feel it all but I alone? My soul is dark with images, and all are dreadful,
Sword, scourge and javelin, and the Roman gibbet,
Women dying horribly in hopeless birth-pangs, men dying of thirst and hunger, the miners dying in the mines
Under the stinking torches, in summer by the Red Sea, consumed with labor in the metal darkness;
And the ankles eaten with rust, and the blood-striped backs, of the oars in a thousand galleys: it would be salvation
To think that I could willingly bear the suffering — if it were possible — for all that lives, I alone:
I dare not think so.
THE WOMAN [*laughing*]: But Simon says that if you've got a stone you wing the next bird, that's natural.
JUDAS:
Oh, hush. Our Lord is coming from the house.

It's morning again, how the world bathes in light; and all
the long clear shadows lying toward Jerusalem.
See there's the fig-tree . . . no, I'll forget my griefs . . . in-
numerably spreading his broad green hands
Sweet with their night-dew to the new day. Oh happy tree.
JESUS [*coming in from the left, speaking to those imag-
ined beside him*]: Keep back the
people from me; I am faint
With the height within. Children, remember always that
dreams are deceivers. No one's exempt from dreaming,
Not even I. But all's fraud: fragments of thought
Fitting themselves together without a mind. It seemed to
me that I stood on a higher tower
Than any pier of those three that blot the tender blue above
Herod's palace. Oh, beyond conception
Exalted over the hills and the seas. But the tower swayed
— it means nothing: perhaps I slept
Having remembered the tower guilty of blood in Siloam —
tottered and waved all its wild height,
I felt the rushes of the air and heard the stones crumbling
. . . I will not cross my day of decision
With a dream's mind. Look how this fig-tree shakes his
banners above me. I came fasting from the house
And now I am hungry, there will be fruit among the broad
leaves. What, utterly barren? Let neither man
Nor bird henceforth eat of these boughs that have
failed me.
JUDAS: Do you wish,
Master, the beautiful tree were dead?
JESUS:
What is that to you?
JUDAS: Oh Master. Master, your face is sor-
rowful, your eyes are bitter. Let us go back
To Galilee where the days were all glad.

JESUS: Faint-hearted, Ah brittle-hearted
counselor, must one build power
On the dry twigs and stubble of such friends as you? I tell
you freely that to-day will see done
What was determined before the rock was laid down under
the towers of the mountains. This jewel of time
Laid in my hand, rejected once would be lost forever. All
greatness is a wrestling with time,
And one who has got the grip of his gaunt opponent, if he
lets go will not thrive, not again, but go down
And the dust cover him, sheet over sheet above his for-
gotten face, century on century. I feel
Signs in my soul and know my occasion. My soul is all
towers.
That idle dream was the human part's rebellion against the
divine: it is dreadful for the frail flesh
Born of a woman to serve the triumphant occasions of God.
The lightnings and pinnacles of my spirit
Cry out and call me: my Father is my trumpet: and the
people's eyes. Indeed it is strange: I am now so lifted
Toward God that I seem to myself, among all these press-
ing
Faces and voices, rather to walk alone in an ancient gar-
den, among dark trunks of stone trees
And patches of moon; imagining these things.
I can shake it off. [*He addresses the imagined people.*]
Listen and hear me. I have gone in the
past privately up to Jerusalem; but now
My sun has risen, the hour shines and beckons, my day has
come up. It is not forbidden you now to proclaim me
What your hearts know. I am called of my Father to lead
this people; I work my calling. It is not my desire
But even a bitterness to me to be called a king; yet to this
purpose I was born. What's kingdom to *me?*

To me that walked with God my Father before the foundation of the earth? I ruled the angels in heaven:
And now I have come to a little place to save a lost people. What's kingdom to *me?* I seem to myself
Rather to walk alone in an old garden and watch the moon through the trees. You will proclaim me
King of the Jews in the city Jerusalem; and I must take and build up the throne of David, and shepherd
The flocks of God.
(Friend, go to that man's house to whom you have spoken and fetch the colt he has ready:
I must now ride in triumph to the city.)
I will ride among you up to Jerusalem to be your King,
And all the streets and palaces will shout my coming. Yet listen and hear me. Herod will flee to Rome,
And Rome shall fall down, her discaptained soldiers
Run gaping and be flung on heaps: now I command you all to be utterly merciful in that high moment,
On the ridge of victory.
Let it be bloodless: let not one body be pierced, one soul made sorrowful. The people rise as one man,
And who shall stay them? but I am making a new thing in the world,
I am making a kingdom not built on blood, I am making a power weaponed with love not violence; a white
Dominion; a smokeless lamp; a pure light.

JUDAS: Alas my Master.
Oh listen to me! He cannot hear me.
His ears are full of the foolish cries of these poor people. His eyes are utterly visionary,
His mind wild with its dream. He is leading them up to sudden bloody destruction.

JESUS: Farewell, farewell

Little friendly Bethany to which I shall never return
But crowned a king.
[*He passes on, and approaches the far side of the scene.*]
You narrow and envious and philacteried foreheads, Ah generation of vipers,
I tell you that if these people should dare be silent the very stones of the pavement would shout *Hosanna.*
[*Jesus goes out, followed by Judas.*]
THE WOMAN [*she stands up and says*]:
I am very tired, and the sun is burning. I must have fallen on slumber while I rested by the road,
I dreamed of hearing a many people go shouting through a dark garden. While I was the mother Night
Including them all. . . . But I am Mary, the wife of Joseph. I have come up as fast as I could,
In hope to see my son at this time. My son is a great prophet among our villages, and now
They tell me that even Jerusalem is crazy to hear him. I heard that he has gone up more like a king . . .
I'm sure he'd not rise against government . . . the people threw down their cloaks under the wheels of his chariot
To color the road with purple and softness, and long green palm-leaves. But I come here with terror in my heart
To be near his triumph. Oh, while his fame flourishes I'll never intrude, I'll see his face from far off,
And the dear masterful sweetness of his face. A few perhaps will know that I am his mother, but no one
Wil lhear me claim him . . . though indeed I'm not a peasant, he needn't be ashamed . . . but he's been lovely from boyhood,
Superior and born a leader, and such a power of discourse. I wouldn't, however, go up to find him;
I'll visit here with his friends in Bethany.

[*She stands at the edge of the scene, on the left.*]

Oh: don't you
know me? I am the mother of the man you love.
And you are Lazarus whom he raised from the dead. Your
face has never changed since.

[*She goes out of sight. The moon shines through the cypress trees during a pause; and Judas comes in, from the right.*]

JUDAS [*terribly agitated*]:

The glory is departed.
Oh, he has changed and changed. But I, what shall I do?
His mind is dreadfully exalted and bitter,
And divided. I cannot understand what he suffers but I see
what he does. He went up shining;
Whenever the people shouted the winning favor we used
to adore was like a flame sweetened
With wine and honey in his face and motions. But when
he had entered the city the people became silent,
Expecting something. Then we could see that he also ex-
pected something.—— That never came; and his face
Darkened. He then went up to the temple. But I and two
others held close beside him, babbling like children
About the sights of the city, glad to be fools if we could
divert the gloom of his mind. I showed him
The huge stones of the walls and terraces: he suddenly
turned,
Stopped on the stair, and lifting his two clenched hands
toward heaven, he screamed in a voice not like his own
To those below him, but like the lake gulls in Galilee over
the full fishing-boats:
"They'll all be broken! Look at these stones that are as
long as two men and the thickness of a man's height,
Not one shall stand but go down, the giants of old, not one
be left on another. I destroy. I destroy.

The temple and the temple treasures, the priests and the gray rabbis. No man shall be saved but those that believe me
The son of God.... What do I say," he shouted... "the son is the Father's equal. I, here, am God.
But keep it secret awhile." He looked at the people as though he hated them. We could do nothing. I remembered
How hard he has grown toward suffering lately, and careless of the poor. When the woman came and poured that perfume
Over his hair and his clothes, enough in value to have saved many from misery, he was pleased and praised her.
He is changed indeed.
He entered the temple: then those that vend pigeons to offer at the altar, and the poor hucksters that sell
The holy ribbons and trays of sweetmeats: the courts are crowded at passover-time: they seemed to enrage him.
He said, "Go forth. You are making the house of prayer a thieves' den." He twisted a whip out of hard cords
And drove them, and made a screaming riot in the temple.... So all the people were gathered to him again
To follow him, because they love destruction. He has found the dreadful key to their hearts. One poor old man
Had fallen and cut his forehead on the brass edge of the tray, and lay weeping among the crushed candies,
His white hair matted with watery blood.
We lifted him up. I cannot tell whether Jesus has gone mad, or has indeed grown
Too near the power that makes falcons and lions, earthquakes and Rome, as much as the corn in the fields
And the breasts of mothers, and the happier birds. He is terrible now. He has the shining power a few moments
And then stands brooding dumb, or suddenly through the

old sweetness a jet of poison. I have begged and prayed to him,
On my knees, with tears, to return down from the city. He looked across me with haggard eyes and answered
That he was God, and would never go down. But then I heard that he has begun to despair, for he said
"The sacrifice has come to the temple: not a bull nor a goat: but God
Himself to God. Perhaps my kingdom is not of this world."
Instantly he stretched his neck and shouted:
"This world is nothing. It is dust and spittle. All those that trust me inherit eternal life and eternal
Delight: all those that reject me shall scream
In fires a world with no end."

[*Seeing one approaching from the right Judas moves toward the left, and Jesus enters, addressing a crowd of people imagined about him.*]

JESUS: Ah Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
How I'd have covered you with my wings and shielded you from my Father's anger. But now you shall see
For the cold priests' sake and the lying scribes' sake and the mocking rabble's,
The son of a woman but not a man come down like a mountain eagle above you cowering and strike
The great stones of your walls asunder with his heel and crush your towers under the soles of his feet
Until you are taught. If the people had been united the triumph would have been bloodless: but now, woe, woe,
The mother city, the great stones on the ancient hill. The moon shall be blood and the sun darkened
And the stars fall. I bring not peace but a sword; the brother shall hate the brother and the child his father.
The old walls must be pulled down before the founding

of the new, the field must be broken before the spring sowing,

The old wood must be cut before the young forest.

[*He goes out among the trees.*]

JUDAS: They gape and follow; he has found the dreadful key to their hearts.

Now I see clearly my duty and destiny.

... The passion is past, the bitter drop has been drained, the veins

In my hands and about my heart seem light and empty. I am like a ghost of one who did something

Ages ago, walking in a dead garden under the white of the moon.

THE WOMAN [*coming in from the left*]:

You happy traveler

Coming down from the crowded city: what news of the prophet Jesus? How do men hear him?

JUDAS: With fear

And fascination, like birds charmed by a serpent.

THE WOMAN: Ah. Greatness never escaped envy. A few

Must hate the man whom all love. Go down: he is well rid of you.

JUDAS: I am one of those that love him more nearly

Than their own lives. He saved me from despair

The time when the cruelties that are done under the sky and all the oppressions trampled me to madness.

He has come perhaps nearer to God than any prophet before.

THE WOMAN: I, here, plain as I am,

Homely as I am, I am his mother.

[*Judas shudders and is silent.*]

Oh why will you not
look me in the eyes and why are you trembling?
Has evil come down? I know it is terrible to lead this
people. But tell me quickly all the worst you have.
I shall endure it. [*With pride.*] The mother of Jesus is
not a weak woman.
JUDAS: He is well. . . . Oh, he is well, mother. . . .
The people gather like sheep under the shadow of his
boughs; against the white burning noon, and death
On the dry hills. I have watched his white beauty
Above them like the mastlight over a boat, or the pilot of
a boat sailing far waters
Uncharted, no prow has furrowed before, the pale face
flecked with foam of danger and the constant eyes
Threading the rage of the storm, the hand among reefs
unknown steady on the helm. [*Miserably: to him-
self.*] That I am the reef
To wreck my captain! Should I tell her that!
[*Jesus comes in and stands sorrowfully on the right of
the scene.*]
THE WOMAN: Oh happy
friend: for he must love you if you love him so well:
And maybe you've even touched him from day to day,
serving his food or the like: what does he aim at,
Do you think? What can he reach and have rest?
JUDAS: Mother:
those that ascend the mountain toward God have none.
And whoever dares in the endless cross-waves of time pilot
the people,
Until misfortune wrecks him has none.
THE WOMAN: I thought . . . I be-
lieved you loved him. What name are you called?
JUDAS: Judas.
THE WOMAN:

Your face was like an uncovered grave when you said "misfortune." I will send and . . . no, but go up myself
And warn him of you.

[*She crosses over toward Jesus, walking wearily; but stops humbly at a little distance from him.*]

JUDAS: Even before the fact my face is like a sepulchre in honest eyes
And my name is abominable. That's now . . . that's my calling.
I have seen dread in my life. I have seen a crucified man: I can't . . . He was a robber and murderer.
The black spread-eagle against the white cloud
Is cut in my mind past cure; strained basket ribs, and pale clay mouth opening and closing in the air.
If Jesus should persist in Jerusalem, preaching destruction, rousing the looting street-people: I see
The future as bitter clearly as the unendurable memory: the sudden Roman hand of suppression,
The machine squadrons, the screaming streets cleared:
And the Roman vengeance, all the roadside masted with moaning crucifixions, from the city to Bethany.
Oh Jesus, I also love men.

[*Jesus, on the extreme right of the scene, speaks to those imagined about him. His mother stands waiting outside the circle.*]

JESUS: Whether you ought to pay tribute to Cæsar? Whose name's on the coin? Cæsar's?

JUDAS:

I think I have never been able in all the gray and futile of my life
To stop one tear or staunch one man's wound, but now I am able. I'll say to the priests "Quietness is all.
Take him at night. I'm one of his men and I can lead you to his bed." What harm can they do him, but keep him

Three or four days for the city peace and dismiss him?
He has made no insurrection till now (from hour to hour
he may do it — who knows his mind? — to captain
A river of blood) they'll only keep him quiet and dismiss
him home. There he'll not dream of towers,
But the sweet and passionate mind walk humbly. And he'll
forgive me, he'll let me follow him, we'll walk together
In the white dust between the fig and the olive, as in the
days that break my heart to remember.
[*He stands rapt in thought.*]
JESUS:
... And to God the things that are God's. Some of you
know
That God is here. God dreamed a dream yesterday for
Israel but you were afraid. It is not you
That reject God, it is God rejecting this people. I dreamed
a dream for the lion of Judah but the lion's
Dwindled to a dog: it will not lick the wounds of freedom
and victory; it will lick the scab of its mange
And snuffle for a bone under Cæsar's table. Therefore I
have twitched the cloth of my kingdom out of your
hands
To reach it westward: the Romans have courage and power
and discipline and what have *you?* Hatred and memo-
ries.
They have no love in their hearts but you have mere
hatred. See, while I speak you are ready to stone
me.... Oh children,
Oh little sudden children, how can I help but love you? I
am not turned
From one soul here.... But take up your sick: I'll heal
none at this time. It is not easy to have seen
Hope die in rags, and be the fool of a city.
[*To one who seems to speak to him privately.*]

My mother? I have no mother. [*To the people.*]
Go home to your places.

[*Judas passes heavily across the scene to go out on the right.*]

MARY:

It is I, Jesus. I've come all the tired way from Nazareth.

JESUS: You have not done wisely.

MARY: Look there: the man
With the hollow face and the torn cloak: has turned against you, Judas his name, intends to betray you.

JESUS:

They all betray me. No one is able to betray me. You stood here listening,
Did you not see me use them at pleasure? Sting them with words until the stones jumped in their hands,
And show the other side of my heart and conquer them?

MARY: No man is great enough to stand where you stand.
Kings have paid guards for the ebbs of favor; they buy faithfulness.

JESUS: No *man*. That is true. Poor withered rose,
Does that which God has touched fade?

MARY: I am indeed so tired . . . [*turning away from him: to herself*] Oh, if his confidence
Lies there: then I am the one that betrays him, with the lie that covered my sin. Never forgiven. [*To her son.*] Oh come home,
Come home, Jesus,
From the fierce cowardly city and too many people. I watched their faces, their eyes are shallow and whetted

Three or four days for the city peace and dismiss him?
He has made no insurrection till now (from hour to hour
he may do it — who knows his mind? — to captain
A river of blood) they'll only keep him quiet and dismiss
him home. There he'll not dream of towers,
But the sweet and passionate mind walk humbly. And he'll
forgive me, he'll let me follow him, we'll walk together
In the white dust between the fig and the olive, as in the
days that break my heart to remember.
[*He stands rapt in thought.*]
JESUS:
... And to God the things that are God's. Some of you
know
That God is here. God dreamed a dream yesterday for
Israel but you were afraid. It is not you
That reject God, it is God rejecting this people. I dreamed
a dream for the lion of Judah but the lion's
Dwindled to a dog: it will not lick the wounds of freedom
and victory; it will lick the scab of its mange
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Come home, Jesus,
From the fierce cowardly city and too many people. I watched their faces, their eyes are shallow and whetted

Yet, Demon, I am the son of God. Not now in a desert, in
a dark garden. Oh, as for these Jews,
They are taught from childhood to swallow absurd marvels
Without winking, what is that to me? They have no other
glory now. The girls find a kind-hearted
Carpenter to patch the skiff with a scrap of marriage, or
a cobbler to mend the leak in the shoe: common,
These years of the fall. The mystery remains though.
He must have been lovely . . . you daughters of Jerusalem
that you stir not up nor awaken my love . . .
He is lovelier than the desert dawns. Three . . . four times
in my life I have been one with our Father,
The night and the day, the dark seas and the little foun-
tains, the sown and the desert, the morning star
And the mountains against morning and the mountain
cedars, the sheep and the wolves, the Hebrews and
the free nomads
That eat camels and worship a stone, and the sun cures
them like salt into the marrow in the bones;
All, all, and times future and past
The hanging leaves on one tree: there is not a word nor a
dream nor any way to declare his loveliness
Except to have felt and known, to have *been* the beauty.
Even the cruelties and agonies that my poor Judas
Chokes on: were there in the net, shining. The hawk
shone like the dove. Why, there it is! Exultation,
You stripped dupe? I have gathered my ruins.
Life after life, at the bottom of the pit comes exultation.
I seem to remember so many nights?
In the smell of old cypresses in the garden darkness. And
the means of power,
All clear and formed, like tangible symbols laid in my
mind. Two thousand years are laid in my hands
Like grains of corn. Not for the power: Oh, more than

power, actual possession. To be with my people,
In their very hearts, a part of their being, inseparable
from those that love me, more closely touching them
Than the cloth of the inner garment touches the flesh.
That this is tyrannous
I know, that it is love run to lust: but I will possess them.
The hawk shines like the dove. Oh, power
Bought at the price these hands and feet and all this body
perishing in torture will pay is holy
Their minds love terror, their souls cry to be sacrificed
for: pain's almost the God
Of doubtful men, who tremble expecting to endure it. Their
cruelty sublimed. And I think the brute cross itself,
Hewn down to a gibbet now, has been worshiped; it stands
yet for an idol of life and power in the dreaming
Soul of the world and the waters under humanity, whence
floating again
It will fly up heaven, and heavy with triumphant blood and
renewal, the very nails and the beams alive.
I saw my future when I was with God; but now at length
in a flashing moment the means: I frightfully
Lifted up drawing all men to my feet: I go a stranger
passage to a greater dominion,
More tyrannous, more terrible, more true, than Cæsar or
any subduer of the earth before him has dared to
dream of
In a dream on his bed, over the prostrate city, before the
pale weary dawn
Creeps through his palace, through the purple fringes,
between the polished agate pillars, to steal it away.
JUDAS [*coming in and approaching him*]:
Master, I have so longed to find you alone. I beseech you,
Oh I adjure you, to come away from this city.

JESUS: You? Poor nerve of pity, is it so hard to do what you have to do?

JUDAS: For insurrection is blind madness, and would be punished bloodily, lives upon lives. You have said that you love men: you go about to destroy them. Oh, master, the poor drift of the street, with no weapons: have you *seen* soldiers?

JESUS: I have seen the angels of God. When a handful of my followers dare to lift up their hands against authority: that is the signal to call down to our van the shining hosts of God.

JUDAS: O master. Oh our master, turn from this!... I have been spying for you: I come from mingling with the priests and the priests' servants: they mean to arrest you. To imprison you: to-night perhaps. Ah, my Lord. My savior in the past. I will call you my God: I beseech you to leave this city to its own damnations. But do not you accept the guilt of the deaths of men. By torture: Rome nails them to crosses.

JESUS: You have always been without faith, and the sick fool of your pity.

JUDAS [*falling on his knees, clutching at Jesus' cloak*]: You *teach* mercy: be merciful. All I ask is that you come away and not force destruction. To let the people alone is the mercy: all stirring is death to them. [*He lets go the cloak.*] I know by heart that agate inflexible look in his eyes. There is no hope in this merciless man: I must do my office.

JESUS:

Needs must, poor Judas. But I am not merciless. Does brown agate

Being wrung flow drops like these? After you've done it, and seen the issue, Judas, you'll need consoling,

And find no comforter: but how can I comfort you now beforehand?
For if I could make you understand the death and the life your deed mothers, you'd never do it,
And twenty centuries to come go captainless, for lack of your deed. If it is required of you to die ignorant,
What is that to you? I tell you feelingly, it is the honor of all men living to be dupes of God
And serve not their own ends nor understandings but His, and so die. I that am more than a man
Know this and more, and serve and *am served.*

JUDAS: You are assuming the blood-guiltiness of perhaps a hundred lives forfeit in torment for rebellion; and not that alone: all the statutes and taxes screwed tighter afterwards on all the innocent. You that preached mercy! But I am able to prevent you. It is necessary for one man to be put under restraint, to save the people.... Oh my friend, my once master, my love forever: forgive me before the act!

JESUS:

Listen to me now, Judas, and remember.
Because I know your scrupulous heart, and I don't wish you to die despairing. There is not one creature,
Neither yourself nor anyone, nor a fly nor flung stone, but does exactly and fatally the thing
That it needs must; neither less nor more. This is the roots of forgiveness. This is our secret, Judas.
For the people's hearts are not scrupulous like yours, and if they heard it they'd run on license and die,
In the falling and splitting world, now that the sword and civilization and exile will break the sureties
And ungroove the lives.... "I bid you beware of the net, fishermen.

You see men walking and they seem to be free but look at the faces, they're caught.

There was never a man cut himself loose." An old song, Judas, humming in my head, the woman my mother

Used to sing by the lake shore: I fear now she's forgotten it. It meant the net of God's will. A song

That fountains power to the powerful, and to all, endurance. Suck on that when I'm gone.

—But make haste, my poor friend, see the priests and settle with them. I warn you, the time runs short: to-morrow I intend to raise such a crested wave of the people as will sweep me to my kingdom and drown resistance. I shall draw all men to me: when I am *lifted up.*

[*Judas goes, in haste, with a gesture of despair.*]

JESUS:

Now my heart is faint, even in the midst of its exultation. It is well for the Greek artist

Shaping a stone to some form of beauty; he holds the plan in his mind and hews to it, and what falls off

Is not hurt, nor the block moans at the mallet. But I that am cutting the world to a new shape

And making a good and beautiful form, not of stone, unimagined before, a new age . . . Oh horrible, to carve

A child out of the shuddering breast and body of my mother! . . . Why do I dream that? Because I said

That those who do my will are my mother? She'll cry too, that unlucky mother of my body: but others

Have seen their sons killed, it is not uncommon. My poor Judas

I fear will die, or but linger maimed in the heart and self-tormenting: did I forget now to tell him

That his name shall ride with mine down forests of ages? But that's vanity. Oh, I'm not innocent. The chisel

Of *my* carving cuts flesh and bleeds.

[*To the mutes who have entered:*]

You are here, my faithful? Judas has fallen off from us,
poor fellow, he has gone over to lean on priests. Now
keep watch for me to-night: did you bring swords as
I bade you? Two hacked old blades — Oh, it's enough.
We must always be ready to offer a form of resistance,
for a signal to my Father, who will send the angels.

[*He withdraws from the mutes.*]

For mild submission might appease them and lose me the
cross: without that
The fierce future world would never kneel down to slake its
lusts at my fountain. Only a crucified
God can fill the wolf bowels of Rome; only a torture high
up in the air, and crossed beams, hang sovereign
When the blond savages exalt their kings; when the north
moves, and the hairy-breasted north is unbound,
And Cæsar a mouse under the hooves of the horses....
Alas, poor dreamer,
Dreaming wildly because you must die. I know certainly
the cross will conquer; but Rome to go down,
Or nations be born to colonize with new powers and
peoples, and my gaunt pain erected in counterfeit,
The coasts of undreamed of oceans, is delirium.

[*He returns to the mutes, who seem to be asleep.*]

When I am bitterly troubled in spirit, could you not keep
watch for me one hour?

[*He withdraws from the mutes.*]

The long obscure future like a weeping cloud covers me
with sadness. Dear Judas, make haste!
Ere my heart fail and repent and renounce power. All
power crushes its object, there is none innocent.
Religion is the most tyrannous, worming its way through
the ears and eyes to the cup of the spirit, overgrowing

The life in its pool with alien and stronger life, drugging
the water at the well-head: so I possess them
From inward: no man shall live
As if *I* had not lived. The hawk of my love is not left
hungry. I sacrifice to this end all the hopes
Of these good villagers who've come up from Galilee ex-
pecting kingdom; and the woman my mother; and my
own
Flesh to be tortured; and my poor Judas, who'll do his
office and break; and dreadful beyond these, un-
numbered
Multitudes of souls from wombs unborn yet; the wasted
valor of ten thousand martyrs: Oh, my own people
Perhaps will stab each other in a sacred madness, dis-
puting over some chance word that my mouth made
While the mind slept. And men will imagine hells and go
mad with terror, for so I have feathered the arrows
Of persuasion with fire, and men will put out the eyes of
their minds, lest faith
Become impossible being looked at, and their souls perish.
... But what
are men *now?*
Are the bodies free, or the minds full of clear light, or the
hearts fearless? I having no foothold but slippery
Broken hearts and despairs, the world is so heaped against
me, am yet lifting my peoples nearer
In emotion, and even at length in powers and perception,
to the universal God than ever humanity
Has climbed before.... Dreams, dreams. Who can pick
out the good from the evil?... It is likely that all
these futures
Are only the raving mind of one about to be killed, myself
and my poor Judas alone

Will bear the brunt; I shall go up and die and be presently forgotten. I have been deluded again,
Imagination my traitor, as often before. I am in the net, and this deliberately sought
Torture on the cross is the only real thing.
Yonder the torches blink and dip among the black trunks.
They have lost the path, now they have found it again, and up the stone steps.
Dear Judas, it is God drives us.
It is not shameful to be duped by God. I have known his glory in my lifetime, I have *been* his glory, I know
Beyond illusion the enormous beauty of the torch in which our agonies and all are particles of fire.
[*To his three or four companions, as the torches surround him:*]
What, will you let them take me? Strike, Peter! He has missed the head
And cut a man's ear: save yourselves! Enough's done
To edge the required judgment.
[*To the others:*]
Let my friends go. I am the one. Tell them so, Judas.
[*His companions escape among the trees. Jesus is led out to the right, with Judas and the mutes of the other party. A pause, Mary comes in from the left.*]
MARY:
They have brought me words that shine like new stars. . . . Oh omnipotent God, with whom through delusion he is joined in truth,
How marvelously thou hast made my secret sin the glory of the world. I saw his triumph in his eyes
Before they told me. Without my sin he'd not have been born, nor yet without my falsehood have triumphed,

For that exalted his deceived heart to the height of his destiny. Now they have told me that to-day
Is the set day, and he enters his kingdom. He will appear with those calm shining eyes before Herod,
And Herod will step down from his place and kneel down; and before Pontius Pilate the Roman governor,
Whose cold face will forget its pride. They both shall be dumb with shame, but Jesus will speak proudly
And kindly his decrees. I feared at first for a while, remembering my sin, but now I am confident.
[*A mute passes.*] Oh traveler,
What news, what news? Oh, I knew it!
My soul doth magnify the Lord, who maketh light out of darkness,
Honor out of shame, out of sin a shining. I knew from the first day, from the lips finding the breast,
From the day when the babe looked in my face and smiled.
His hand puts down the mighty and exalts the humble. All generations shall call me blessed.
[*A mute passes.*] Oh traveler,
What news, what news?
That is a lie, traveler. Lies glide about the city like fishes in a pool.
What the eyes have not seen is a lie.... Merciful God! whom I blasphemed in the bitter shame of his eyes:
But thou, Lord, knowest that my mind had gone wild with shame, and I was myself deceived at first, being ignorant,
A child and a fool, and love had come to my soul in the holy evening, in the field, in the flush of twilight,
And I knew nothing...
Will no one come from the city and tell me?... I wish the night of darkness would cover me and I were asleep

Under deep waters, until the sandals of the man bearing true tidings be heard in the dust.

[*She covers her eyes and sits erect, shuddering at moments, with her shawl drawn over her eyes. A cross is set up, burdened with the form of a man, distantly visible at the back of the scene. A mute passes in the foreground.*]

MARY:

What news, Oh what news?

...You little gardens about Bethany, did you hear this man? Oh mountains

And headlands of the north you have heard him; wide, ribbed and waterless desert, Oh freedom of the Arab horsemen

And sunrise and the lions: for his words are true.

He tells me plainly that my son is exalted as on a hill, and uplifted on a high place,

The people of the city flocking to his feet. They feed on the light of his face: he is called their king; he beholds them.

You leap you mountains like flames, Oh Lebanon the forest shakes, you little round hills like lambs of the flock

Dancing and butting with the curly foreheads: but as for me, I am stricken, I can neither speak nor be glad,

I require nothing but death; I suffered too much, just now, while I was quiet, while I sat waiting,

Joy is a sword, like a sharp sword.

[*She sits stonily erect, with open eyes and the lifted haggard features of ecstasy. A man with an unchangeable bluish face enters and speaks without approaching Mary.*]

LAZARUS:

I am Lazarus who lay dead four days; and having known death and the dreams of corruption and lived afterwards

For several years, and again died, and rotted in the rock tomb, it is not possible for me
To be deluded like others by any of the habits of death. I also am only a shell and remainder
Like the other three ghosts that haunt the garden; but never subdued by their dreams, and being incapable of pity,
Astonishment or fear or any other of the accidents of life, I am sent every night at this time
To tell this woman not to rejoice; and that her son is condemned. It would be better for these three
If they could sleep; but the great passions life was not wide enough for are not so easily exhausted,
But echo in the wood for certain years or millenniums. As for myself, being wholly released from pain
And pleasure, sleeping and waking are all one.... This woman is so full-joyed at the false tidings her dream
Deludes her with, I would fain linger a little before I slay joy.

[*He stands about the center of the scene, rigidly reposeful, and waits in silence.*]

MARY: Lord God: prayer-hearing Lord,
Oh beautiful and loving God, I have one thing left to implore. Bless thou the traveler who passed but now
And brought me true word of my son's triumphs. His body and his soul, his house and his sons, be happy forever.
Add nothing to me. The straining crystal spirit and the broken old mother-body can hold no more
Happiness.

LAZARUS: Hail Mary, chosen for extremes. Remember that grief and happiness are only shadows of a shadow.
A blade of grass is a thing but these are not things,
And sooner withered.

MARY: Not a thing but a fire: my happiness

consumes me. Oh friend, you are not a stranger but Lazarus,

Whose guest I am: you have watched my son crowned king, and the winning favor of his ways when the people honored him.

Tell me nothing yet, for my heart is full.

LAZARUS: I would I might tell you nothing.

MARY: Oh why is your face not changed, Lazarus, Lazarus?

LAZARUS: Come into the house; for what I have to say ought not to be said by the road,

Where those that pass may see you and stare at you, a chosen woman.

MARY: I will not stir from this place.

LAZARUS: It is possible for Rumors not to be true.

MARY: Oh I know it, dear friend. I heard false tidings before the true came, and grieved

Before I was glad.... Your face not changed? I thought it would surely change when Jesus whom you love is glorified

In the favor of God and the great city. Yes, now I can see Joy in your face.

LAZARUS: No, Mary, I am out of that net. I would to God that you were out of that net.

MARY:

You have always been strange, they say, since you were called from the cavern, with the hands and the face wrapped in white cloths.

... I am not so pierced with joy as I was: now you may tell me a little: a few of the words of Jesus

When he was praised; and whether he could keep from

weeping. *I* cannot. The tears keep trickling, whatever I do.

LAZARUS:

He is not well.

MARY: Oh, I am sorry. It's one of the headaches he suffers after long days of sun.

His spirit was always too hard a rider for the gentle body.

LAZARUS: Alas, the crown that they crowned him with

Was painful; he endures anguish also in the hands

And in the feet; there were red stripes on his back. I think he cannot live long.

MARY: How . . . stripes, Lazarus?

God help you, it is not your will to bring me false news, but your mind is crazed

Since the rock tomb.

LAZARUS: My thoughts were made straight there; and quieted, filled with the light of darkness. The minds are crazed

That take joy at a penny's worth or pain at a penny's.

MARY: I have my joy, you shall not frighten it away.

LAZARUS:

But while you are clutching it, while you speak of it, you writhe with fear. Oh strong mother of one of the greatest

Of torchlike men: there is only one pathway to peace for a great passion. Truth is the way, take the truth

Against your breast and endure its horns. So life will at last be conquered. After some thousands of years

The smoky unserviceable remainders of love and desire will be dissolved and be still. . . . Your son

Has chosen his tools and made his own death; he has chosen a painful death in order to become a God.

MARY:

Ah poor flawed mind: you'd make me think my Jesus as wise as yourself, would you? . . . Listen, Lazarus . . . you'll do well . . . go about the market-place singing riddles to people. Have a boy with a drum, and the half-caste Greeks will ring farthings on the drum-skin. You'll be the best juggler . . . that blue-dead face will fetch crowds, the resurrected man . . .

Where is he now, in the temple?

LAZARUS: He is hanged on a cross on the hill Golgotha.

MARY: Fool. To dream I'd believe . . .

This is for my sin, this false terror; and his triumphs for my love. It is hard that I am so choked with sickness,

A stone in my throat, when I must walk to the city. Ai, God. Why do men lie?

[*Judas enters from the right, accompanied by several mutes. They are moving toward Lazarus and Mary.*]

JUDAS: . . . Telling my reasons.

I am Judas running like a snapping dog along the streets of Jerusalem, snapping my reasons.

I say to one man:

[*He speaks to one of the mutes.*]

Hear me, eyes! To get the firebrand locked up, to save the city. What we need is peace.

But who'd have dreamed they'd condemn him?

[*To another:*] Money, money, money.

Now mercy's been made a fool and pity is a murderer,

What won't a man do for the fat silver? A pity that I threw it back to them . . .

[*To a third:*]

I swear before God, friend,

I'm not the person that did it, I'm not . . . Let me go.

[*To Mary:*] Do y' see a brand, Madam,
On the mouth or brow? Am I marked? God marks them.
MARY [*to Lazarus*]: What is this creature?
JUDAS: That means innocent murderers: but me:
The person that kills his . . .
[*Looking at Lazarus:*] Bluebottle, don't I know you? And this one's . . . Oh! . . . This old woman
Is the cave it came from.
[*He falls on his knees before Mary, and tries to clutch the skirt of her garment.*]
I loved him, mother.
MARY [*to Lazarus*]: If it's a dog will you keep it off me? The slaver's poisonous
When they go mad. Oh: dead man:
He'd never be warned: I warned him: I knew this hollow and vile
Face from the first, when it said "misfortune." But Jesus, because I warned him of treachery, has walked into treachery.
I wish my mouth had been stopped with the seas of drowning.
[*She strikes at Judas' head with her hand.*]
I don't believe. I don't believe. God's eyes
Are not put out yet, you are all liars. Oh! Oh! Oh!
LAZARUS: Cry out all your heart, Mary,
Because you believe: me, and the ball of repentance moaning here at your feet, and the witnesses here.
MARY:
When my eyes see it I'll believe and die.
[*Looking up; triumphantly:*] Look there where he comes, freely striding, angrily. Oh faithless.

Oh fools. You *wished* him to be dead.
. . . It is not he; I am cheated.

JUDAS: I remember my reason. Listen to me,
I have to tell you my reason: it was all for deliverance: I thought, by doing the worst imaginable thing
I should be freed of tormenting pity. Wasn't that . . .
No. No.

MARY: You think, perhaps, kneeling there,
That I will curse you? Because you betrayed my son, because you are infamous, because no viper is made
Venomous, nor reptile of the slime loathsome, to your measure? You think I'll be troubled for that? I'll stand here and pray
God to fill up your hollow face with fire for a lantern in hell? To bathe the long yellow fingers
In melted iron?
I will not curse you, Judas, I will curse myself. I am the first that betrayed him. The mothers, we do it:
Wolf-driven by love, or out of compliance, or fat convenience:
A child for Moloch. I am that woman: the giver of blood and milk to be sacrificed. I'll never tell you,
Though worse follows, how else I betrayed again
My blood and my milk. I built it up and forced it up and adored it, and the end's unbearable.

LAZARUS: Be silent.
Those inflamed, rolling and desert eyes, and the voice dragged through sand-colored lips, know nothing of the end.
You'd use a lonely and towered sorrow, and face the anguished core with cut stone, if you could feel
Fixed on you out of the dark the yearning innumerable eyes of many nations and an age of the world
Worshiping the mother of God, this palsied old woman.

Your son has done what men are not able to do;
He has chosen and made his own fate. The Roman Cæsar will call your son his master and his God; the floods
That wash away Cæsar and divide the booty, shall worship your son. The unconjectured selvages
And closed orbits of the ocean ends of the earth shall hear of him.

MARY: It was bitter enough when I was alone:
And now we are put into a pit to be stared at. I will go and find him.

[*She goes off toward the distantly seen cross.*]

JUDAS: There, there, slowly the Mother
Night: but I can hurry and run home to her; I ache for darkness.

LAZARUS: You, Judas, cease trembling. You were his tool
And broke to serve him: the power that makes the future so consumes the present. Therefore your name shall couple
With his in men's minds for many centuries: you enter his kingdom with him, as the hawk's lice with the hawk
Climb the blue towers of the sky under the down of the feathers.

JUDAS: If blue-face were as cunning as he looks
He'd know what I hide under my coat: look here: a noosed cord. What's that for? Find one for yourself, Lazarus,
And undo the cruellest miracle man ever suffered. I am going a little distance into the wood
And buy myself an eternal peace for three minutes of breathlessness, never to see any more
The tortured nailed-up body in my mind, nor hear the useless and endless moaning of beasts and men.

LAZARUS:

Let him go. He has done all he was made for; the rest's his
own. Let him and the other at the poles of the wood,
Their pain drawn up to burning points and cut off, praise
God after the monstrous manner of mankind.
While the white moon glides from this garden; the glory
of darkness returns a moment, on the cliffs of dawn.

THE LOVING SHEPHERDESS

I

THE little one-room schoolhouse among the redwoods
Opened its door, a dozen children ran out
And saw on the narrow road between the dense trees
A person — a girl by the long light-colored hair:
The torn brown cloak that she wore might be a man's
Or woman's either — walking hastily northward
Among a huddle of sheep. Her thin young face
Seemed joyful, and lighted from inside, and formed
Too finely to be so wind-burnt. As she went forward
One or another of the trotting sheep would turn
Its head to look at her face, and one would press
Its matted shoulder against her moving thigh.
The schoolchildren stood laughing and shouting together.
"Who's that?" "Clare Walker," they said, "down from the
hills.
She'd fifty sheep and now she's got eight, nine,
Ten: what have you done with all the others,
Clare Walker?"
The joy that had lived in her face died, she yet
Went on as if she were deaf, with forward eyes
And lifted head, but the delicate lips moving.
The jeering children ran in behind her and the sheep
Drew nervously on before, except the old ram,
That close at her side dipped his coiled horns a little

But neither looked back nor edged forward. An urchin
shouted
"You killed your daddy, why don't you kill your sheep?"
And a fat girl, "Oh where's your lover, Clare Walker?
He didn't want you after all."

The patriarch ram
That walked beside her wore a greasy brown bundle
Tied on his back with cords in the felt of wool,
And one of the little boys, running by, snatched at it
So that it fell. Clare bent to gather it fallen,
And tears dropped from her eyes. She offered no threat
With the bent staff of rosy-barked madrone-wood
That lay in her hand, but said "Oh please, Oh please,"
As meek as one of her ewes. An eight-year-old girl
Shrilled, "Whistle for the dogs, make her run like a cat,
Call your dog, Charlie Geary!" But a brown-skinned
Spanish-Indian boy came forward and said,
"You let her alone. They'll not hurt you, Clare Walker.
Don't cry, I'll walk beside you." She thanked him,
still crying.
Four of the children, who lived southward, turned back;
The rest followed more quietly.

The black-haired boy
Said gently "Remember to keep in the road, Clare Walker.
There's enough grass. The ranchers will sick their dogs
on you
If you go into the pastures, because their cows
Won't eat where the sheep have passed; but you can walk
Into the woods." She answered, "You're kind, you're kind.
Oh yes, I always remember." The small road dipped
Under the river when they'd come down the hill,
A shallow mountain river that Clare skipped over

By stone after stone, the sheep wading beside her.
The friendly boy went south to the farm on the hill, "good-by, good-by," and Clare with her little flock
Kept northward among great trees like towers in the river-valley. Her sheep sidled the path, sniffing
The bitter sorrel, lavender-flowering in shade, and the withered ferns. Toward evening they found a hollow
Of autumn grass.

II

Clare laughed and was glad, she undid the bundle from the ram's back
And found in the folds a battered metal cup and a broken loaf. She shared her bread with the sheep,
A morsel for each, and prettily laughing
Pushed down the reaching faces. "Piggies, eat grass. Leave me the crust, Tiny, I can't eat grass.
Nosie, keep off. Here Frannie, here Frannie." One of the ewes came close and stood to be milked, Clare stroked
The little udders and drank when the cup filled, and filled it again and drank, dividing her crust
With the milch ewe; the flock wandered the glade, nibbling white grass. There was only one lamb among them,
The others had died in the spring storm.

The light in the glade suddenly increased and changed, the hill
High eastward began to shine and be rosy-colored, and bathed in so clear a light that up the bare hill
Each clump of yucca stood like a star, bristling sharp rays; while westward the spires of the giant wood
Were strangely tall and intensely dark on the layered

colors of the winter sundown; their blunt points touched
The high tender blue, their heads were backed by the amber, the thick-branched columns
Crossed flaming rose. Then Clare with the flush
Of the solemn and glad sky on her face went lightly down to the river to wash her cup; and the flock
Fed on a moment before they looked up and missed her. The ewe called Frannie had gone with Clare and the others
Heard Frannie's hooves on the crisp oak-leaves at the edge of the glade. They followed, bleating, and found their mistress
On the brink of the stream, in the clear gloom of the wood, and nipped the cresses from the water. Thence all returning
Lay down together in the glade, but Clare among them
Sat combing her hair. with a gap-toothed comb brought from the bundle. The evening deepened, the thick blond strands
Hissed in the comb and glimmered in the brown twilight, Clare began weeping, full of sorrow for no reason
As she had been full of happiness before. She braided her hair and pillowed her head on the bundle; she heard
The sheep breathing about her and felt the warmth of their bodies, through the heavy fleeces.

In the night she moaned
And bolted upright. "Oh come, come,
Come Fern, come Frannie, Leader and Saul and Tiny,
We have to go on," she whispered, sobbing with fear, and stood
With a glimmer in her hair among the sheep rising. The halved moon had arisen clear of the hill,

And touched her hair, and the hollow, in the mist from the river, was a lake of whiteness. Clare stood wreathed with her flock
And stared at the dark towers of the wood, the dream faded away from her mind, she sighed and fondled
The frightened foreheads. "Lie down, lie down darlings, we can't escape it." But after that they were restless
And heard noises in the night till dawn.

They rose in the quivering
Pale clearness before daylight, Clare milked her ewe,
The others feeding drifted across the glade
Like little clouds at sunrise wandering apart;
She lifted up the madrone-wood staff and called them.
"Fay, Fern, Oh Frannie. Come Saul.
Leader and Tiny and Nosie, we have to go on."
They went to the stream and then returned to the road
And very slowly went north, nibbling the margin
Bushes and grass, tracking the tender dust
With numberless prints of oblique crossings and driftings.
They came to Fogler's place and two ruffian dogs
Flew over the fence: Clare screaming "Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh,"
An inarticulate wildbird cry, brandishing
The staff but never striking, stood out against them,
That dashed by her, and the packed and trembling ball
Of fleeces rolling into the wood was broken.
The sheep might have been torn there, some ewe or the lamb
Against the great foundations of the trees, but Fogler
Ran shouting over the road after his dogs
And drove them home. Clare gathered her flock, the sobbing
Throats and the tired eyes, "Fay, Fern, Oh Frannie,
Come Leader, come little Hornie, come Saul;" and Fogler:
"You ought to get a good dog to help take care of them."

He eyed curiously her thin young face,
Pale parted lips cracked by the sun and wind,
And then the thin bare ankles and broken shoes.
"Are you Clare Walker? I heard that you'd gone away:
But you're Clare Walker, aren't you?" "We had a dog,"
She said, "a long time ago but he went away.
There, Nosie. Poor Frannie. There. These poor things
Can find their food, but what could I keep a dog with?
But that was some years ago." He said, "Are these all?
They're all gathered? I heard you'd thirty or forty."
Then hastily, for he saw the long hazel eyes
Filling with tears, "Where are you going, Clare Walker?
Because I think it will rain in a week or two,
You can't sleep out then." She answered with a little shudder,
"Wherever I go this winter will be all right.
I'm going somewhere next April." Fogler stood rubbing
His short black beard, then dropped his hand to scratch
The ram's forehead by the horns but Saul drew away.
And Fogler said: "You're too young and too pretty
To wander around the country like this.
I'd ask you to come here when it rains, but my wife . . .
And how could I keep the sheep here?" "Ah, no," she answered,
"I couldn't come back." "Well, wait," he said, "for a minute,
Until I go to the house. Will you wait, Clare?
I'll tie up the dogs. I've got some biscuit and things . . ."
He returned with a sack of food, and two old shoes
A little better than Clare's. She sat on a root;
He knelt before her, fumbling the knotted laces
Of those she had on, and she felt his hands tremble.
His wife's shoes were too short for the slender feet. When the others

Had been replaced. Fogler bent suddenly and kissed
Clare's knee, where the coat had slipped back. He looked
at her face,
His own burning, but in hers nor fear nor laughter,
Nor desire nor aversion showed. He said "good-by,"
And hurried away.

Clare traveled northward, and sometimes
Half running, more often loitering, and the sheep fed.
In the afternoon she led them into the willows,
And choosing a green pool of the shallow stream
Bathed, while the sheep bleated to her from the shoals.
They made a pleasant picture, the girl and her friends, in
the green shade
Shafted with golden light falling through the alder
branches. Her body, the scare-crow garments laid by,
Though hermit-ribbed and with boyishly flattened flanks
hardly a woman's,
Was smooth and flowing, glazed with bright water, the
shoulders and breasts beautiful, and moved with a
rapid confidence
That contradicted her mind's abstractions. She laughed
aloud and jetted handfuls of shining water
At the sheep on the bank; the old ram stood blinking with
pleasure, shaking his horns. But after a time Clare's
mood
Was changed, as if she thought happiness must end.
She shivered and moved heavily out of the stream
And wept on the shore, her hands clasping her ankles,
Her face bowed on her knees, her knotted-up coils
Of citron-colored hair loosening. The ewe
That she called Nosie approached behind her and pressed
Her chin on the wet shoulder; Clare turned then, moaning,
And drew the bony head against the soft breasts.

"Oh what will you do," she whispered laughing
and sobbing,
"When all this comes to an end?"

She stood and stroked off
The drops of water, and dressed hastily. They went
On farther; now there was no more forest by the road,
But open fields. The river bent suddenly westward
And made a pond that shone like a red coal
Against the shore of the ocean, under the sundown
Sky, with a skeleton of sand-bar
Between the pond and the sea.

When deepening twilight
Made all things gray and made trespass safe, Clare entered
The seaward fields with her flock. They had fed scantly
In the redwood forest, and here on the dead grass
The cattle had cropped all summer they could not sleep.
She led them hour after hour under the still stars.
Once they ran down to the glimmering beach to avoid
The herd and the range bull; they returned, and wandered
The low last bluff, where sparse grass labors to live in the
wind-heaped sand. Silently they pastured northward,
Gray file of shadows, between the glimmer and hushing
moan of the ocean and the dark silence of the hills.
The erect one wore a pallor of starlight woven in her hair.
Before moonrise they huddled together
In a hollow cup of old dune that opened seaward, but sheltered them from the nightwind and from morning eyes.

III

The bleating of sheep answered the barking of sea-lions
and Clare awoke

Dazzled in the broad dawn. The land-wind lifted the light-
spun manes of the waves, a drift of sea-lions
Swung in the surf and looked at the shore, sleek heads up-
lifted and great brown eyes with a glaze of blind
Blue sea-light in them. "You lovely creatures," she whis-
pered.
She went to the verge and felt the foam at her ankles. "You
lovely creatures come closer." The sheep followed her
And stopped in the sand with lonesome cries. Clare stood
and trembled at the simple morning of the world; there
was nothing
But hills and sea, not a tree on the shore nor a ship on the
sea; an edge of the hill kindled with gold,
And the sun rose. Then Clare took home her soul from the
world and went on. When she was wandering the flats
Of open pasture between the Sur Hill sea-face and the
great separate sea-dome rock at Point Sur,
Forgetting, as often before, that she and her flock were
trespassers
In cattle country: she looked and a young cowboy rode
down from the east. "You'll have to get off this range.
Get out of this field," he said, "your tallow-hoofed mut-
ton." "Oh," she answered trembling, "I'm going. I
got lost in the night.
Don't drive them." "A woman?" he said. He jerked the
reins and sat staring. "Where did *you* drop from?"
She answered faintly,
With a favor-making smile, "From the south." "Who's with
you?" "Nobody."
"Keep going, and get behind the hill if you can
Before Nick Miles the foreman looks down this way."
She said to the ram, "Oh Saul, Oh hurry. Come Leader.
Tiny and Frannie and Nosie, we have to go on.
Oh, hurry, Fern." They huddled bleating about her,

And she in the midst made haste; they pressed against her
And moved in silence. The young cowboy rode on the east
As hoping to hide the flock from Nick Miles his foreman,
Sidelong in the saddle, and gazed at Clare, at the twisting
Ripple of pale bright hair from her brown skin
Behind the temples. She felt that his looks were friendly,
She turned and timidly smiled. Then she could see
That he was not a man but a boy, sixteen
Or seventeen; she felt more courage. "What would your foreman
Do if he saw us?" "He'd be rough. But," he said,
"You'll soon be behind the hill. Where are you going?"
She made no answer. "To Monterey?" "Oh . . . to nowhere!"
She shivered and sought his face with her eyes. "To nowhere, I mean."
"Well," he said sulkily, "where did you sleep last night?
Somewhere?" She said with eagerness, "Ah, two miles back,
On the edge of the sand; we weren't really in the field."
He stared. "You're a queer one. Is that old coat
All you've got on?" "No, no, there's a dress under it.
But scrubbed so often," she said, "with sand and water
Because I had no soap, it's nothing but rags."
"You needn't hurry, no one can see you now.
. . . My name's Will Brighton," he said. "Well, mine is Clare."
"Where do you live when you're at home, Clare?" "I haven't any."
They rounded the second spur of the hill. Gray lupine clothed the north flank, a herd of cattle stared down
From the pale slope of dead grass above the gray thicket. Rumps high, low quarters, they were part of the world's end sag,

The inverted arch from the Sur Hill height to the flat foreland and up the black lava rock of Point Sur;
In the open gap the mountain sea-wall of the world foam-footed went northward. Beyond the third spur Clare saw
A barn and a house up the wrinkled hill, oak-scrub and sycamores. The house built of squared logs, time-blackened,
Striped with white plaster between the black logs, a tall dead cube with a broken chimney, made her afraid;
Its indestructible crystalline shape. "Oh! There's a house.
They'll see us from there. I'll go back..." "Don't be afraid,"
He answered smiling, "that place has no eyes.
There you can turn your sheep in the old corral,
Or graze them under the buckeyes until evening.
No one will come." She sighed, and then faintly:
"Nobody ever lives there, you're sure?" "Not for eight years.
You can go in," he said nervously: "maybe
You haven't been inside a house a good while?"
She looked up at his pleasant unformed young face,
It was blushing hot. "Oh, what's the matter with the house?"
"Nothing. Our owner bought the ranch, and the house
Stands empty, he didn't want it. They tell me an old man
Claiming to be God... a kind of a preacher boarded there,
And the family busted up." She said "I don't believe
Any such story." "Well, he was kind of a preacher.
They say his girl killed herself; he washed his hands
With fire and vanished." "Then she was crazy. What, spill
Her own one precious life," she said trembling,
"She'd nothing but that? Ah! no!
No matter how miserable, what goes in a moment,

You know . . . out . . ." Her head bowed, and her hand
Dug anxiously in the deep pads of wool
On the shoulder of the ram walking against her side;
When her face lifted again even the unwatchful boy
Took notice of tears.

They approached the house; the fence
in front was broken but the windows and doors were
whole,
The rose that grew over the rotted porch steps was dead;
yet the sleep of the house seemed incorruptible,
It made Clare and the boy talk low. He dropped out of
the saddle and made the bridle hang down
To serve for tether. "Come round by the back," he whis-
pered, "this door is locked." "What for?" "To go in,"
he whispered.
"Ah no, I have to stay with my sheep. Why in the world
should I go in to your dirty old house?"
His face now he'd dismounted was level with hers; she saw
the straw-colored hairs on his lip, and freckles,
For he'd grown pale. "Hell," he said, narrowing his eyes,
hoping to be manly and bully her: but the heart failed
him,
He said sadly, "I hoped you'd come in." She breathed,
"Oh," her mouth twitching,
But whether with fear or laughter no one could tell,
And said, "You've been kind. Does nobody ever come
here?
Because I'd have to leave my poor friends outdoors,
Some one might come and hurt them." "The sheep?
Oh, nobody
No one can see them. Oh, Clare, come on. Look here,"
He ran and opened a gate, "the corral fence
Is good as new and the grass hasn't been touched."

The small flock entered gladly and found green weeds
In the matted gray. Clare slowly returned. The boy
Catching her by the hand to draw her toward the house,
She saw his young strained face, and wondered. "Have you ever
Been, with a woman?" "Ah," he said proudly, "yes."
But the honesty of her gaze dissolving his confidence
He looked at the ground and said mournfully, "She wasn't white.
And I think she was quite old . . ." Clare in her turn
Reddened. "If it would make you happy," she said.
"I want to leave glad memories. And you'll not be sorry
After I'm gone?"

The sheep, missing their mistress,
Bleated and moved uneasily, forgetting to feed,
While Clare walked in the house. She said, "Oh, not yet.
Let's look at the house. What was the man's name
Whose daughter . . . he said he was God and suddenly vanished?"
"A man named Barclay," he said, "kind of a preacher."
They spoke in whispers, peering about. At length Clare sighed,
And stripped off the long brown coat.

When they returned outdoors,
Blinking in the sun, the boy bent his flushed face
Toward Clare's pale one and said, "Dear, you can stay here
As long as you want, but I must go back to work."
She heard the sheep bleating, and said, "Good-by.
Good luck, Will Brighton." She hurried to her flock, while he
Mounted, but when he had ridden three strides of a canter

Clare was crying, "Oh help. Oh help. Oo! Oo!"
He returned,
And found her in the near corner of the corral
On hands and knees, her flock huddling about her,
Peering down a pit in the earth. Oak-scrub and leafless
Buckeyes made a dark screen toward the hill, and Clare
Stood up against it, her white face and light hair
Shining against it, and cried, "Oh, help me, they've fallen,
Two have fallen." The pit was an old well;
The hand-pump had fallen in, and the timbers
That closed the mouth had crumbled to yellow meal.
Clare lay and moaned on the brink among the dark nettles,
Will Brighton brought the braided line that hung
at his saddle
And made it fast and went down.

The well-shaft was so filled up
With earth-fall and stones and rotting timbers, it was possible for the boy and girl to hoist up the fallen
Without other contrivance than the looped rope. The one came struggling and sobbing, Clare cried her name,
"Oh, Fern, Fern, Fern." She stood and fell, and scrambled up to her feet, and plunged on three legs. The other
Came flaccid, it slipped in the rope and hung head downward, Clare made no cry. When it was laid by the well-brink
A slime of half-chewed leaves fell from its mouth. The boy climbed up. "While I was making your pleasure,"
Clare said, "this came. While I was lying there. What's punished is kindness." He touched the lifeless ewe with his foot,
Clare knelt against her and pushed him away. He said, "It fell the first and its neck was broken." And Clare:
"This was the one that would nudge my hands

When I was quiet, she'd come behind me and touch me, I
called her Nosie. One night we were all near frozen
And starved, I felt her friendly touches all night." She
lifted the head. "Oh, Nosie, I loved you best.
Fern's leg is broken. We'll all be like you in a little while."
The boy ran and caught Fern, and said
"The bones are all right. A sprain I guess, a bad sprain.
I'll come in the evening, Clare, if you're still here.
I'm sorry." She sat with the head on her lap, and he rode
away. After a time she laid it on the earth.
She went and felt Fern's fore-leg and went slowly up the
hill; her small flock followed.

IV

Fern lagged and lagged,
Dibbling the dust with the mere points of the hoof
Of the hurt fore-leg, and rolling up to her shepherdess
The ache of reproachful eyes. "Oh, Fern, Oh, Fern,
What can I do? I'm not a man, to be able to carry you.
My father, he could have carried you." Tears from Clare's
eyes
Fell in the roadway; she was always either joyful or
weeping.
They climbed for half the day, only a steep mile
With many rests, and lay on the Sur Hill summit.
The sun and the ocean were far down below, like fire in a
bowl;
The shadow of the hills lay slanting up a thin mist
Into the eastern sky, dark immense lines
Going out of the world.

Clare slept wretchedly, for thirst
And anxious dreams and sorrow. She saw the lighthouse

Glow and flash all night under the hill;
The wind turned south, she smelled the river they had left,
Small flying clouds from the south crossed the weak stars.
In the morning Fern would not walk.

Between noon and morning
A dark-skinned man on a tall hammer-headed
Flea-bitten gray horse rode north on the hill-crest.
Clare ran to meet him. "Please help me. One of my sheep
Has hurt her leg and can't walk. . . . Entiendes inglés?"
She faltered, seeing him Indian-Spanish, and the dark eyes
Gave no sign whether they understood, gazing through her
with a blue light across them
Like the sea-lions' eyes. He answered easily in English,
"What can I do?" in the gentle voice of his people;
And Clare: "I thought you might carry her down. We are
very thirsty, the feed is all dry, here is no water,
And I've been gathering the withered grasses to feed her."
He said, "We could tie her onto the horse." "Ah, no,
She'd be worse hurt. . . . She's light and little, she was born
in the hills." The other sheep had followed their shep-
herdess
Into the road and sadly looked up, the man smiled and dis-
mounted among them. "Where are you going?"
She answered, "North. Oh, come and see her. Unless you
carry her
I don't know what we can do." "But it's two miles
Down to the river." The lame ewe, whether frightened
By the stranger and his horse, or rested at length,
Now rose and went quietly to Clare, the hurt fore-leg
Limping but serving. Clare laughed with pleasure. "Oh, now,
We can go down by ourselves. Come Fern, come Saul,
Fay, Frannie, Leader . . ." She was about to have called
The name of the one that died yesterday; her face

Changed and she walked in silence, Fern at her thigh.
The friendly stranger walked on the other side,
And his horse followed the sheep. He said: "I have seen
Many things, of this world and the others, but what are you?"
"My name's Clare Walker." "Well, I am Onorio Vasquez.
I meant, what are you doing? I think that I'd have seen you or heard of you
If you live near." "I'm doing? I'm taking care of my sheep." She looked at his face to be sure of kindness,
And said, "I'm doing like most other people; take care of those that need me and go on till I die.
But *I* know when it will be; that's the only . . . I'm often afraid." Her look went westward to the day moon,
Faint white shot bird in her wane, the wings bent downward, falling in the clear over the ocean cloud-bank.
"Most people will see hundreds of moons: I shall see five.
When this one's finished." Vasquez looked intently at her thin young face, turned sideways from him, the parted
Sun-scarred lips, the high bridge of the nose, dark eyes and light hair; she was thin, but no sign of sickness; her eyes
Met his and he looked down and said nothing. When he looked down he remembered chiefly the smooth brown throat
And the little hollow over the notch of the breast-bone. He said at length, carefully, "You needn't be afraid.
I often," he murmured shyly, "have visions. I used to think they taught me something, but I was a fool.
If you saw a vision, or you heard a voice from heaven, it is nothing." She answered, "What I fear really's the pain.
The rest is only a kind of strangeness." Her eyes were full of tears and he said anxiously, "Oh, never

Let visions nor voices fool you.
They are wonderful but we see them by chance; I think they mean something in their own country but they mean
Nothing in this; they have nothing to do with our lives and deaths." She answered in so changed a voice that Vasquez
Stared; the tears were gone and her eyes were laughing. "Oh, no, it was nothing," she said, "in the way of that.
Visions? My trouble is a natural thing.
But tell me about those visions." He muttered to himself
With a shamed face and answered, "Not now." The south wind
That drove the dust of the little troop before them
Now increased and struck hard, where the road gained
A look-out point over the fork of the canyon
And the redwood forest below. The sheep were coughing
In the whirl of wind. At this point the lame ewe
Lay down and refused to rise, "Oh, now, now, now,"
Clare wrung her hands, "we're near the water too. We're all so thirsty.
Oh, Fern!" Vasquez said sadly, "If she'd be quiet
Over my shoulders, but she won't." He heard a hoarse voice
Cry in the canyon, and Clare softly cried answer
And ran to the brink of the road. She stood there panting
Above the pitch and hollow of the gorge, her grotesque cloak
Blown up to her shoulders, flapping like wings
About the half nakedness of the slender body.
Vasquez looked down the way of her gaze, expecting
To see some tragical thing; he saw nothing but a wide heron
Laboring thwart wind from the shore over the heads of the redwoods. A heavy dark hawk balanced in the storm
And suddenly darted; the heron, the wings and long legs

wavering in terror, fell, screaming, the long throat
Twisted under the body; Clare screamed in answer. The
pirate death drove by and had missed, and circled
For a new strike, the poor frightened fisherman
Beat the air over the heads of the redwoods and labored
upward. Again and again death struck, and the heron
Fell, with the same lost cry, and escaped; but the last fall
Was into the wood, the hawk followed, both passed from
sight
Under the waving spires of the wood.

Clare Walker
Turned, striving with the gesture of a terrified child
To be quiet, her clenched fist pressed on her mouth,
Her teeth against the knuckles, and her blonde hair
Wild on the wind. "Oh, what can save him, can save him?
Oh, how he cried at each fall!" She crouched in the wind
At the edge of the road, trembling; the ewe called Tiny
Crossed over and touched her, the others turned anxious
looks
From sniffing the autumn-pinched leaves of the groundling
blackberries.
When she was quieted Vasquez said, "You love
All creatures alike." She looked at his face inquiringly
With wide candid brown eyes, either not knowing
Or not thinking. He said, "It is now not far
Down to the running water; we'd better stretch her
Across the saddle"— he nodded toward the lame ewe —
"You hold her by the fore-legs and I by the hind ones,
She'll not be hurt." Clare's voice quieted the sheep
And Vasquez' the indignant horse. They came down at
length
To dark water under gigantic trees.

V

She helped Fern drink before herself drooped eagerly
Her breast against the brown stones and kissed the cold stream.
She brought from the bundle what food remained, and shared it
With Vasquez and the munching sheep. There were three apples
From Fogler's trees, and a little jar of honey
And crumbled comb from his hives, and Clare drew a net
Of water-cress from the autumn-hushed water to freshen
The old bread and the broken biscuits. She was gay with delight
At having something to give. They sat on the bank, where century
After century of drooping redwood needles had made the earth, as if the dark trees were older
Than their own mother.

Clare answered Vasquez' question and said she had come from the coast mountains in the south;
She'd left her home a long time ago; and Fogler, the farmer by the Big Sur, had given her this food
Because he was sorry his dogs had worried the sheep. But yesterday she was passing Point Sur, and Fern
Had fallen into a well by the house. She said nothing of the other ewe, that had died; and Vasquez
Seemed to clench himself tight: "What were you doing at Point Sur, it's not on the road?" "The sheep were hungry,
And I wandered off the road in the dark. It was wicked of me to walk in the pasture, but a young cowboy
Helped me on the right way. We looked into the house."

He said, "Let no one go back there, let its mice have it.
God lived there once and tried to make peace with the people; no peace was made." She stared in silence, and Vasquez:
"After that time I bawled for death, like a calf for the cow. There were no visions. My brothers watched me,
And held me under the hammers of food and sleep."
He ceased; then Clare in a troubled silence
Thought he was lying, for she thought certainly that no one
Ever had desired death. But, for he looked unhappy
And said nothing, she said Will Brighton had told her
Something about a man who claimed to be God,
"Whose daughter," she said, "died." Vasquez stood up
And said trembling, "In the ruin of San Antonio church
I saw an owl as big as one of your sheep
Sleeping above the little gilt Virgin above the altar.
That was no vision. I want to hear nothing
Of what there was at Point Sur." He went to his horse
That stood drooping against the stream-bank, and rode
The steep soft slope between the broad butts of trees.
But, leaving the undisturbed air of the wood
For the rough wind of the roadway, he stopped and went back.
"It will rain," he said. "You ought to think of yourself.
The wind is digging water since we came down.
My father's place is too far. There's an old empty cabin
A short ways on." She had been crouching again
Over the stream to drink, and rose with wet lips
But answered nothing. Vasquez felt inwardly dizzy
For no reason he knew, as if a gray bird
Turned in his breast and flirted half open wings
Like a wild pigeon bathing. He said, "You'll see it
Above the creek on the right hand of the road

Only a little way north." He turned and rode back,
Hearing her call "Good-by," into the wind on the road.

This man was that Onorio Vasquez
Who used to live on Palo Corona mountain
With his father and his six brothers, but now they lived
Up Mill Creek Canyon beside the abandoned lime-kiln
On land that was not their own. For yearly on this coast
Taxes increase, land grows harder to hold,
Poor people must move their places. Onorio had wealth
Of visions, but those are not coinable. A power in his mind
Was more than equal to the life he was born to,
But fear, or narrowing fortune, had kept it shut
From a larger life; the power wasted itself
In making purposeless visions, himself perceived them
To have no meaning relative to any known thing: but always
They made him different from his brothers; they gave him
A kind of freedom; they were the jewels and value of his life.
So that when once, at a critical time, they failed
And were not seen for a year, he'd hungered to die.
That was nine years ago; his mind was now quieter,
But still it found all its value in visions.
Between them, he hired out his hands to the coast farms,
Or delved the garden at home.

Clare Walker, when he was gone, forgot him at once.
She drank a third draught, then she dropped off her shoes
And washed the dust from her feet. Poor Fern was now hobbling
Among the others, and they'd found vines to feed on
At the near edge of the wood, so that Clare felt
Her shepherdess mind at peace, to throw off

The coat and the rags and bathe in the slender stream,
Flattening herself to find the finger's depth water.
The water and the air were cold now, she rubbed her body
Hastily dry with the bleached rags of her dress
And huddled the cloak about her, but hung the other
Over a branch to dry. Sadly she studied
The broken shoes and found them useless at last,
And flung them into the bushes. An hour later
She resumed the dress, she called her flock to go on
Northward. "Come Fern, come Frannie. Oh, Saul.
Leader and Hornie and Tiny, we have to go on."

VI

The sky had blackened and the wind raised a dust
When they came up to the road from the closed quiet of the wood,
The sun was behind the hill but not down yet. Clare passed the lichen-plated abandoned cabin that Vasquez
Had wished her to use, because there was not a blade of pasture about it, nothing but the shafted jealousy.
And foodless possession of the great redwoods. She saw the gray bed of the Little Sur like a dry bone
Through its winter willows, and on the left in the sudden
Sea-opening V of the canyon the sun streaming through a cloud, the lank striped ocean, and an arched film
Of sand blown from a dune at the stream's foot. The road ahead went over a bridge and up the bare hill
In lightning zigzags; a small black bead came down the lightning, flashing at the turns in the strained light,
A motor-car driven fast, Clare urged her flock into the ditch by the road, but the car turned
This side the bridge and glided down a steep driveway.

When Clare came and looked down she saw the farmhouse
Beside the creek, and a hundred bee-hives and a leafless
orchard,
Crossed by the wheeling swords of the sun.
A man with a gray mustache covering his mouth
Stood by the road, Clare felt him stare at the sheep
And stare at her bare feet, though his eyes were hidden
In the dark of his face in the shadow of the turbid light.
She smiled and murmured, "Good evening." He giggled to
himself
Like a half-witted person and stared at her feet.
She passed, in the swirls of light and dust, the old man
Followed and called, "Hey: Missy: where will you sleep?"
"Why, somewhere up there," she answered. He giggled,
"Eh, Eh!
If I were you. Ho," he said joyfully,
"If I were in your *shoes,* I'd look for a roof.
It's big and bare, Serra Hill. You from the south?"
"I've been in the rain before," she answered. She laid
Her hand on a matted fleece. "I've got to find them
Some feeding-place, they're hungry, they've been in the
hungry
Redwoods." He stopped and peered and giggled:
"One's lame.
But," he said chuckling, "you could go on all night
And never muddy your shoes. Ho, ho! Listen, Missy.
You ain't a Mexican, I guess you've had bad luck.
I'll fix you up in the hay-shed and you'll sleep dry,
These fellows can feed all night." "The owner," she said,
"Wouldn't let me. They'd spoil the hay." "The owner.
Bless you, the poor old man's too busy to notice.
Paying his debts. That was his sharp son
Drove in just now. They hated the old man
But now they come like turkey-buzzards to watch him die."

"Oh! Is he dying?" "Why, fairly comfortable.
As well as you can expect." "I think, we'll go on,"
She murmured faintly. "Just as you like, Missy.
But nobody cares whether you spoil the hay.
There's plenty more in the barn, and all the stock
'll soon be cleared out. I don't work for his boys.
Ho, it's begun already." Some drops were flying, and the sun
Drowned in a cloud, or had set, suddenly the light was twilight. The old man waved his hand in the wind
Over the hives and the orchard. "This place," he giggled, "meant the world to old Warfield: Hey, watch them sell.
It means a shiny new car to each of the boys." He shot up the collar of his coat, and the huddling sheep
Tucked in their rumps; the rain on a burst of wind, small drops but many. The sheep looked up at their mistress,
Who said, feeling the drift like needles on her cheek, and cold drops
Run down by her shoulder, "If nobody minds, you think, about our lying in the hay." "Hell no, come in.
Only you'll have to be out in the gray to-morrow, before the sharp sons get up." He led her about
By the bridge, through the gapped fence, not to be seen from the house.
The hay-shed was well roofed, and walled southward
Against the usual drive of the rain. Clare saw in the twilight
Wealth of fodder and litter, and was glad, and the sheep
Entered and fed.

After an hour the old man
Returned, with a smell of fried grease in the gray darkness.

Clare rose to meet him, she thought he was bringing food,
But the odor was but a relic of his own supper.
"It's raining," he said; as if she could fail to hear
The hissing drift on the roof; "you'd be cosy now
On Serra Hill." He paused and seemed deeply thoughtful,
And said, "But still you could walk all night and never
Get your shoes wet. Ho, ho! You're a fine girl,
How do you come to be on the road? Eh? Trouble?"
"I'm going north. You're kind," she said, "people are kind."
"Why, yes, I'm a kind man. Well, now, sleep cosy."
He reached into the dark and touched her, she stood
Quietly and felt his hand. A dog was heard barking
Through the hiss of rain. He said, "There's that damn' dog.
I tied him up after I let you in,
Now he'll be yelling all night." The old man stumped off
Into the rain, then Clare went back to her sheep
And burrowed in the hay amongst them.

The old man returned
A second time; Clare was asleep and she felt
The sheep lifting their heads to stare at his lantern.
"Oh! What do you want?" "Company, company," he muttered.
"They've got an old hatchet-faced nurse in the house...
But he's been dying for a month, he makes me nervous.
The boys don't mind, but *I'm* nervous." He kicked
One of the sheep to make it rise and make room,
Clare murmured sadly, "Don't hurt them." He sat in the hay
In heavy silence, holding the lantern on knee
As if it were a fretful baby. The fulvous glimmer
Through one of his hands showed the flesh red, and seemed

To etch the bones in it, the gnarled shafts of the fingers
And scaly lumps in the skin. Clare heard the chained dog howling,
And the rain had ceased. She reached in pitying tenderness
And touched the old man's illuminated hand and said
"How hard you have worked." "Akh," he groaned, "so has he.
And gets . . ." He moved his hand to let the warm light
Lie on her face, so that her face and his own were planets
To the lantern sun; hers smooth except the wind-blistered lips, pure-featured, pitying, with large dark eyes
The little sparkles of the reflected lantern had room to swim in; his bristly and wrinkled, and the eyes
Like sparks in a bush; the sheep uneasily below the faces moved formless, only Saul's watchful head
With the curled horns in the halo of light. The faint and farther rays of that sun touched falling spheres
Of water from the eaves at the open side of the shed, or lost themselves at the other in cobwebbed corners
And the dust of space. In the darkness beyond all stars the little river made a noise. The old man muttered,
"I heard him choking night before last and still he goes on.
It's a hell of a long ways to nothing . . .
You know the best thing to do? Tip this in the straw,"
He tilted the lantern a little, "end in a minute,
In a blaze and yell." She said, "No! no!" and he felt
The hay trembling beside him. The unconscious motion of her fear
Was not inward but toward the sheep. He observed
Nothing of that, but giggled to himself to feel
The hay trembling beside him. He dipped his hand
And caught her bare foot; clutching it with his fingers
He scratched the sole with his thumb, but Clare sat quiet
In pale terror of tipping the lantern. The old man

Groaned and stood up. "You wouldn't sit like a stone
If I were twenty years younger. Oh, damn you," he said,
"You think we get old? I'm the same fresh flame of youth still,
Stuck in an old wrinkled filthy rawhide
That soon'll rot and lie choking." She stammered, "Ah, no, no,
You oughtn't to think so. You're well and strong. Or maybe
At last it'll come suddenly or while you sleep,
Never a pain." He swung up the lantern
Before his hairy and age-deformed face. "Look at me. Pfah!
And still it's April inside." He turned to go out,
Clare whispered, "Oh! Wait." She stood wringing her hands,
Warm light and darkness in waves flushing and veiling
Her perplexed face, the lantern in the old man's fist
Swinging beyond his body. "Oh, how can I tell?"
She said trembling. "You see: I'll never come back:
If anything I could do would give you some pleasure;
And you wouldn't be sorry after I'm gone." He turned,
Stamping his feet. "Heh?" He held up the lantern
And stared at her face and giggled. She heard the sheep
Nestling behind her and saw the old man's mouth
Open to speak, a black hole under the grizzled thatch,
And close again on round silence. "I'd like to make you
Happier," she faltered. "Heh?" He seemed to be trembling
Even more than Clare had trembled; he said at length,
"Was you in earnest?" "I had a great trouble,
So that now nothing seems hard . . .
That a shell broke and truly I love all people.
I'll . . . it's a little thing . . . my time is short."
He stood giggling and fidgeting. "Heh, heh! You be good.
I've got to get my sleep. I was just making the rounds.

He makes me nervous, that old man. It's his stomach
Won't hold nothing. You wouldn't play tricks to-night
And the old man puking his last? Now, you lie down.
Sleep cosy," he said. The lantern went slowly winking
away,
And she was left among the warm sheep, and thoughts
Of death, and to hear the stream; and again the wind
Raved in the dark.

She dreamed that a two-legged whiff of flame
Rose up from the house gable-peak crying, "Oh! Oh!"
And doubled in the middle and fled away on the wind
Like music above the bee-hives.

At dawn a fresh burst of rain
Delayed her, and two of the sheep were coughing. She
thought that no unfriendly person would come in the
rain,
And hoped the old man might think to bring her some food,
she was very hungry. The house-dog that all night long
Had yapped his chain's length, suddenly ran into the shed,
then Clare leaped up in fear for the sheep, but this
Was a friendly dog, loving to fondle and be fondled, he
shook his sides like a mill-wheel and remained amongst
them.
The rain paused and returned, the sheep fed so contentedly
Clare let them rest all morning in the happy shelter, she
dulled her own hunger with sleep. About noon
She lifted her long staff from the hay and stood up. "Come
Saul, come little Hornie,
Fay, Fern and Frannie and Leader, we have to go on.
Tiny, Tiny, get up. Butt and Ben, come on":
These were the two old wethers: and she bade the dog
"Good-by, good-by." He followed however; but at length

Turned back from the crooked road up the open hill
When cold rain fell. Clare was glad of that, yet she wished
She'd had something to give him.

VII

She gained the blasty hill-top,
The unhappy sheep huddling against her thighs,
And so went northward barefoot in the gray rain,
Abstractedly, like a sleepwalker on the ridge
Of his inner necessity, or like
Some random immortal wish of the solitary hills.
If you had seen her you'd have thought that she always
Walked north in the rain on the ridge with the sheep about her.
Yet sometimes in the need of a little pleasure
To star the gray, she'd stop in the road and kiss
One of the wet foreheads: but then run quickly
A few steps on, as if loitering were dangerous,
You'd have pitied her to see her.

Over Mescal Creek
High on the hill, a brook in a rocky gulch, with no canyon,
Light-headed hunger and cold and the loneliness unlocked
Her troubled mind, she talked and sang as she went. "I can't eat the cold cress, but if there were acorns,
Bitter acorns. Ai chinita que si,
Ai que tu dami tu amor. Why did you
Have to go dry at the pinch, Frannie? Poor thing, no matter. Que venga con migo chinita
A donde vivo yo.
I gave them all my bread, the poor shipwrecked people, and they wanted more." She trembled and said, "They're cruel,

But they were hungry. They'll never catch us I think.
Oh, hurry, hurry." With songs learned from the shepherd
she came to the fall of the road into Mill Creek
Canyon.
Two of the sheep were sick and coughing, and Clare
looked down. Flying bodies of fog, and unending fleet
Of formless gray ships in a file fled down the great canyon
Tearing their keels over the redwoods; Clare watched them
and sang, "Oh, golondrina, oh, darting swallow,"
And heard the ocean like the blood in her ears. The west-
covered sun stared a wan light up-canyon
Against the cataract of little clouds.

The two coughing sheep
Brought her to a stand; then she opened their mouths
and found
Their throats full of barbed seeds from the bad hay
Greedily eaten; and the gums about their teeth
Were quilled with the wicked spikes; which drawn,
thin blood
Dripped from the jaw. The folds of the throat her fingers
Could not reach nor relieve; thereafter, when they coughed,
Clare shook with pain. Her pity poisoned her strength.

Unhappy shepherdess,
Numbed feet and hands and the face
Turbid with fever:
You love, and that is no unhappy fate,
Not one person but all, does it warm your winter?
Walking with numbed and cut feet
Along the last ridge of migration
On the last coast above the not-to-be-colonized
Ocean, across the streams of the people
Drawing a faint pilgrimage

As if you were drawing a line at the end of the world
Under the columns of ancestral figures:
So many generations in Asia,
So many in Europe, so many in America:
To sum the whole. Poor Clare Walker, she already
Imagines what sum she will cast in April.

She came by the farmhouse
At Mill Creek, then she wavered in the road and went to the door,
Leaving her sheep in the road; the day was draining
Toward twilight. Clare began to go around the house,
Then stopped and returned and knocked faintly at the door.
No answer; but when she was turning back to the road
The door was opened, by a pale slight young man
With no more chin than a bird, and Mongol-slanted
Eyes; he peered out, saying, "What do you want?" Clare stood
Wringing the rain from her fingers. "Oh, oh," she stammered,
"I don't know what. I have some sheep with me.
I don't know where we can stay." He stood in the door
And looked afraid. The sheep came stringing down
Through the gate Clare had left open. A gray-eyed man
With a white beard pushed by the boy and said
"What does she want? What, are you hungry? Take out your beasts,
We can't have sheep in the yard." Clare ran to the gate,
"Come Leader, come Saul." The old man returned indoors,
Saying, "Wait outside, I'll get you some bread." Clare waited,
Leaning against the gate, it seemed a long while;
The old man came back with changed eyes and changed voice:

"We can't do anything for you. There isn't any bread.
Move on from here." She said through her chattering teeth,
"Come Saul, come Leader, come Frannie. We have to go on.
Poor Fern, come on." They drifted across the Mill Creek bridge
And up the road in the twilight. "The ground-squirrels," she said, "hide in their holes
All winter long, and the birds have perches but we have no place." They tried to huddle in the heart of a bush
Under a redwood, Clare crouched with the sheep about her, her thighs against her belly, her face on her knees,
Not sleeping, but in a twilight consciousness, while the night darkened. In an hour she thought she must move or die.
"Ah little Hornie," she said, feeling with shrivelled fingers the sprouts of the horns in the small arched forehead,
"Come Fern: are you there, Leader? Come Saul, come Nosie . . . Ah, no, I was dreaming. Oh, dear," she whispered, "we're very
Miserable now." She crept out of the bush and the sheep followed; she couldn't count them, she heard them
Plunge in the bush and heard them coughing behind her. They came on the road
In the gray dark; there, though she'd meant to go north
She went back toward the farmhouse. Crossing the bridge
She smelled oak-smoke and thought of warmth. Grown reckless
Clare entered the farmhouse yard with her fleeced following,
But not daring enough to summon the door
Peered in a window. What she saw within
Mixed with her fever seemed fantastic and dreadful. It was nothing strange:

The weak-faced youth, the bearded old man, and two old women
Idle around a lamp on a table. They sat on their chairs in the warmth and streaming light and nothing
Moved their faces. But Clare felt dizzy at heart, she thought they were waiting for death: how could they sit
And not run and not cry? Perhaps they were dead already? Then, the old man's head
Turned, and the youth's fingers drummed on his chair.
One of the blank old women was sewing and the other
Frowned and breathed. She lifted and spoke to whitebeard, then the first old woman
Flashed eyes like rusty knives and sheathed them again
And sewed the cloth; they grew terribly quiet;
Only the white beard quivered. The young man stood up
And moved his mouth for a good while but no one
Of those in the room regarded him. He sighed and saw
Clare's face at the window. She leaped backward; the lamplight
Had fed her eyes with blindness toward the gray night,
She ran in a panic about the barren garden,
Unable to find the gate; the sheep catching her fear
Huddled and plunged, pricking the empty wet earth with numberless hoof-prints. But no one came out pursuing them,
The doors were not opened, the house was quiet. Clare found the gate
And stood by it, whispering, "Dear Tiny. Ah, Fern, that's you. Come Saul," she fumbled each head as it passed the gate-post,
To count the flock.
But all had not passed, a man on a horse
Came plodding the puddled road. Clare thought the world

Was all friendly except in that house, and she ran
To the road's crown. "Oh, Oh," she called; and Onorio
Vasquez answered, "I rode early in the morning
To find you and couldn't find you. I've been north and south.
I thought I could find the track of the sheep." She answered
Through chattering teeth, "I thought I could stand the rain.
I'm sick and the sheep are sick." He said gravely
"There's hardly a man on the coast wouldn't have helped you
Except in that house. There, I think they *need* help.
Well, come and we'll live the night." "How far?" she sighed
Faintly, and he said "Our place is away up-canyon,
You'll find it stiff traveling by daylight even.
To-night's a camp."

He led her to the bridge, and there
Found dry sticks up the bank, leavings of an old flood, under the spring of the timbers,
And made a fire against the creekside under the road for a roof. He stripped her of the dripping cloak
And clothed her in his, the oil-skin had kept it dry, and spread her the blanket from under his saddle to lie on.
The bridge with the tarred road-bed on it was a roof
Over their heads; the sheep, when Clare commanded them, lay down like dogs by the fire. The horse was tethered
To a clump of willow in the night outside.

When her feet and her hands began to be warm he offered her food,
She ate three ravenous mouthfuls and ran from the fire and vomited. He heard her gasping in the night thicket
And a new rain. He went after while and dragged her
Back to the frugal fire and shelter of the bridge.

VIII

She lay and looked up at the great black timbers, the flapping fire-shadows,
And draggled cobwebs heavy with dirt and water;
While Vasquez watched the artery in the lit edge
Of her lean throat jiggle with its jet of blood
Like a slack harp-string plucked: a toneless trembling:
It made him grieve.

After a time she exclaimed
"My sheep. My sheep. Count them." "What," he said, "they all
Are here beside you." "I never dreamed," she answered,
"That any were lost, Oh no! But my sight swam
When I looked at them in the bad light." He looked
And said "Are there not... ten?" "No, nine," she answered.
"Nosie has died. Count them and tell me the truth."
He stood, bowing down his head under the timbers,
And counted seven, then hastily the first two
A second time, and said "Nine." "I'm glad of that,"
She sighed, and was quiet, but her quill fingers working
The border of the saddle blanket. He hoped she would soon
Sleep.

The horse tethered outside the firelight
Snorted, and the sheep lifted their heads, a spot of white
Came down the dark slope. Vasquez laid his brown palm
Over Clare's wrists, "Lie still and rest. The old fellow from the house is coming.
Sleep if you can, I'll talk to him." "Is there a dog?" she whispered trembling. "No, no, the old man is alone."
Who peered under the heavy stringer of the bridge, his

beard shone in the firelight. "Here," he shouted, "Hey!
Burn the road, would you? You want to make people stay
home
And suck the sour bones in their own houses? Come out of
that hole." But Vasquez: "Now, easy, old neighbor.
She wanted
Fire and a roof, she's found what you wouldn't give." "By
God, and a man to sleep with," he said, "that's lucky,
But the bridge, the bridge." "Don't trouble, I'm watching
the fire. Fire's tame, this weather." The old man stood
twitching and peering,
And heard the sheep coughing in their cave
Under the road. He squinted toward Clare, and muttered
at length meekly, "Let me stay a few minutes.
To sit by the little road-fire of freedom. My wife and my
sister have hated each other for thirty years,
And I between them. It makes the air of the house. I some-
times think I can see it boil up like smoke
When I look back at the house from the hill above."
Vasquez said gravely
"I have often watched that." He answered "You haven't
lived in it. They sit in the house and feed on their own
poison
And live forever. I am now too feeble with age to escape."
Clare Walker lifted her head, and faintly:
"Oh stay," she said, "I wish I could gather all that are
unhappy
Before I die. But why do they hate each other?"
"Their nature," he answered, "old women." She sighed
and lay down.
"I shan't grow old." "Young fellow," the old man said
wearily
To Vasquez, "they all make that promise, they never
keep it.

Life glides by and the bright loving creatures
Eat us in the evening. I'd have given this girl bread
And meat, but my hawks were watching me." He'd found
a stone
On the edge of the creek, the other side of the fire, and
squatted there, his two fists
Closing his eyes, the beard shimmering between the bent
wrists. His voice being silent they heard the fire
Burst the tough bark of a wet branch; the wind turned
north, then a gust of hail spattered in the willows
And checked at once, the air became suddenly cold. The
old man lifted his face: "Ah can't you talk?
I thought you'd be gay or I'd not have stayed here, you
too've grown old? I wish that a Power went through
the world
And killed people at thirty when the ashes crust them. You,
cowboy, die, your joints will begin to crackle,
You've had the best. Young bank-clerk, you've had the
best, grow fat and sorry and more dollars? Here,
farmer, die,
You've spent the money: will you bleed the mortgage
Fifty years more? You, cunning pussy of the world, you've
had the fun and the kissing, skip the diseases.
Oh you, you're an honest wife and you've made a baby:
why should you watch him
Grow up and spoil, and dull like cut lead? I see, my dear,
you'll never be filled till you grow poisonous,
With eyes like rusty knives under the gray eyebrows. God
bless you, die." He had risen from the stone, and
trampled,
Each condemnation, some rosy coal fallen out at the fire's
edge
Under his foot as if it had been a life. "Sharp at thirty,"
he said. Clare vaguely moaned

And turned her face to the outer darkness, then Vasquez,
Misunderstanding her pain, thinking it stemmed
From the old man's folly: "Don't mind him, he's not in earnest.
These nothing-wishers of life are never in earnest;
Make mouths to scare you: if they meant it they'd do it
And not be alive to make mouths." She made no answer,
But lay and listened to her own rustling pulse-beat,
Her knees drawn up to her breast. White-beard knelt down and mended the fire,
And brushed his knees. "There's another law that I'd make: to burn the houses. Turn out the people on the roads,
And neither homes nor old women we'd be well off. All young, all gay, all moving, free larks and foolery
By gipsy fires." His voice fell sad: "It's bitter to be a reformer: with two commandments
I'd polish the world a-shining, make the sun ashamed."
Clare Walker stood up, then suddenly sought the dark night
To hide herself in the bushes; her bowels were loosened
With cold and fever. Vasquez half rose to follow her,
And he understood, and stayed by the fire. Then white-beard
Winking and nodding whispered: "Is she a good piece?
Hey, is she sick? I have to protect my son.
Where in hell did she get the sheep?" Vasquez said fiercely,
"You'd better get home, your wife'll be watching for you.
This girl is sick and half starved, I was unwilling
To let her die in the road." The old man stood up
As pricked with a pin at the thought of home. "What? We're free men,"
He said, lifting his feet in an anxious dance
About the low fire: "but it's devilish hard

To be the earthly jewel of two jealous women."
"Look," Vasquez said, "it seems to me that your house is afire.
I see rolls of tall smoke . . ." "By God," he answered,
"I wish it were," he trotted up to the road
While a new drift of hail hissed in the willows,
Softening to rain.

When he was gone, Vasquez
Repaired the fire, and called "Clare! Come in to shelter.
Clare, come! The rain is dangerous for you. The old fool's gone home."
He stumbled in the dark along the strand of the creek,
Calling "Clare, Clare!" then looking backward he saw
The huddle of firelit fleeces moving and rising,
And said "The sheep are scattering away to find you.
You ought to call them." She came then, and stood by the fire.
He heard the bleating cease, and looked back to see her
Quieting her friends, wringing the rain from her hair,
The fire had leaped up to a blaze. Vasquez returned
Under the bridge, then Clare with her lips flushed
And eyes brilliant with fever: "That poor old man, has he gone?
I'm sorry if he's gone.
My father was old, but after he'd plowed the hill-top I've seen him ride
The furrows at a dead run, sowing the grain with both hands, while he controlled the colt with his knees.
The time it fell at the furrow's end
In the fat clay, he was up first and laughing. He was kind and cruel." "Your father?" he said. She answered
"I can't remember my mother, she died to bear me, as I . . .
We kept her picture, she looked like me,

And often my father said I was like her.— Oh what's become of the poor old man, has he gone home?
Here he was happy." "Yes, had to go home," he answered. "But you must sleep. I'll leave you alone if you like,
You promise to stay by the fire and sleep." "Oh I couldn't, truly. My mind's throwing all its wrecks on the shore
And I can't sleep. That was a shipwreck that drove us wandering. I remember all things. Your name's Onorio
Vasquez: I wish you had been my brother." He smiled and touched her cold hand. "For then," she said, "we could talk
Old troubles asleep: I haven't thought, thought,
For a long while, to-night I can't stop my thoughts. But we all must die?" "Spread out your hands to the fire,
Warm yourself, Clare." "No, no," she answered, her teeth chattering, "I'm hot.
My throat aches, yet you see I don't cough, it was Frannie coughing.— It was almost as if I killed my father,
To swear to the lies I told after he was killed, all to save Charlie. Do you think he'd care, after . . .
He was surely dead? You don't believe we have spirits? Nobody believes we have spirits." He began to answer,
And changed his words for caution. "Clare: all you are saying
Is hidden from me. It's like the visions I have,
That go from unknown to unknown." He said proudly,
"I've watched, the whole night of a full moon, an army of centaurs
Come out of the ocean, plunging on Sovranes reef
In wide splendors of silver water,
And swim with their broad hooves between the reef and the shore and go up
Over the mountain — I never knew why.

What you are saying is like that." "Oh, I'll tell you . . ."
"To-morrow,"
He pleaded, remembering she'd eaten nothing and seeing
The pulse like a plucked harp-string jiggle in her throat;
He felt like a pain of his own the frail reserves of her body
Burn unreplenished. "Oh, but I'll tell you: so then
You'll know me, as if we'd been born in the same house,
You'll tell me not to be afraid: maybe I'll sleep
At the turn of night. Onorio — that's really your name?
How stately a name you have — lie down beside me.
I am now so changed: every one's lovely in my eyes
Whether he's brown or white or that poor old man:
In those days nobody but Charlie Maurice
Seemed very dear, as if I'd been blind to all the others.
He lived on the next hill, two miles across a deep valley, and then it was five to the next neighbor
At Vicente Springs; people are so few there. We lived a long way south, where the hills fall straight to the sea,
And higher than these. He lived with his people. We used to meet near a madrone-tree, Charlie would kiss me
And put his hands on my breasts under my clothes. It was quite long before we learned the sweet way
That brings much joy to most living creatures, but brought us misery at last.

IX

"My father," she said,
"Had lived there for thirty years, but after he sold his cattle
And pastured sheep, to make more money, the neighbors
Were never our friends. Oh, they all feared my father;
Sometimes they threatened our shepherd, a Spanish man

Who looked like you, but was always laughing. He'd laugh
And say 'Guarda a Walker!' so then they'd leave him.
But we lived lonely.

One morning of great white clouds gliding from the sea,
When I was with Charlie in the hollow near the madrones,
I felt a pleasure like a sweet fire: for all
My joy before had been in *his* pleasure: but this was my own, it frightened me." She stopped speaking, for Vasquez
Stood up and left her: he went and sat by the fire. Then Clare:
"Why do you leave me, Onorio? Are you angry now?"
"I am afraid," he answered, "of this love.
My visions are the life of my life: if I let the pitcher
Break on the rock and the sun kill the stars,
Life would be emptier than death." Her mind went its own way,
Not understanding so strange a fear: "The clouds were as bright as stars and I could feel them," she said,
"Through the shut lids of my eyes while the sweet fire
Poured through my body: I knew that some dreadful pain would pay for such joy. I never slept after that
But dreamed of a laughing child and wakened with running tears. After I had trembled for days and nights
I asked Tia Livia — that was our shepherd's cousin, she helped me keep house — what sign tells women
When they have conceived: she told me the moon then ceases
To rule our blood. I counted the days then,
Not dreaming that Tia Livia would spy and talk.
Was that not strange? I think that she told the shepherd too,

And the shepherd had warned my lover: for Charlie failed
Our meeting time, but my father was there with a gray face.
In silence, he didn't accuse me, we went home together.

"I met my lover in another place. 'Oh Charlie,
Why do you wear a revolver?' He said the mountain
Was full of rattlers, 'We've killed twenty in a week.
There never have been so many, step carefully sweetheart.'
Sweetheart he called me: you're listening, Onorio?
'Step carefully by the loose stones.' We were too frightened that day
To play together the lovely way we had learned.

"The next time that I saw him, he and my father
Met on a bare hill-top against a gray cloud.
I saw him turn back, but then I saw that he was ashamed
To seem afraid of a man on the ridge of earth,
With the hills and the ocean under his feet: and my father called him.— What was that moan?" She stopped, and Vasquez
Heard it far off, and heard the sap of a stick whistle in the fire. "Nothing," he said, "low thunder
Far out the ocean, or the surf in the creek-mouth." "— I was running up the steep slope to reach them, the breath in my heart
Like saw-grass cut me, I had no power to cry out, the stones and the broken stubble flaked under my feet
So that I seemed running in one place, unable to go up. It was not because he hated my father,
But he was so frightened. They stood as if they were talking, a noise of smoke
Blew from between them, my father turned then and walked

Slowly along the cloud and sat on the hill-top
As if he were tired.
I said after a time, without thinking,
'Go home, Charlie. I'll say that he killed himself.
And give me the revolver, I'll say it was his.'
So Charlie did.
But when the men came up from Salinas I told my lie
So badly that they believed I was the murderer.
I smelled the jail a long while. I saw the day moon
Down the long street the morning I was taken to court,
As weary-looking and stained as if it were something of mine.
I remembered then, that since I came there my blood
Had never been moved when the moon filled: what Livia'd told me.
So then I told them my father took his own life
Because the sheep had a sickness and I was pregnant.
The shepherd and Livia swore that they saw him do it.
I'd have been let home:
But the fever I'd caught gathered to a bursting pain,
I had to be carried from the courthouse to the hospital
And for a time knew nothing.
When I began to see with my eyes again
The doctor said: 'The influenza that takes
Many lives has saved yours, you'll not have a child.
Listen,' he said, 'my girl, if you're wise.
Your miscarriage is your luck. Your pelvis — the bones down there
Are so deformed that it's not possible for you
To bear a living baby: no life can pass there:
And yours would be lost. You'd better remember,
And try not to be reckless.' I remember so well, Onorio.
I have good reason to remember. You never could guess
What a good reason.

My little king was dead
And I was too weak to care. I have a new king.

"When I got home," she said patiently,
"Everybody believed that I was a murderer;
And Charlie was gone. They left me so much alone
That often I myself believed it. I'd lead the sheep to that hill,
There were fifty left out of three hundred,
And pray for pardon."

Sleep and her fever confused her brain,
One heard phrases in the running babble, across a new burst of hail. "Forgive me, father, for I didn't
Know what I was doing." And, "Why have you forsaken me, father?" Her mind was living again the bare south hill-top
And the bitter penitence among the sheep. "The two men that I loved and the baby that I never saw,
All taken away."

Then Vasquez was calling her name to break the black memories; she turned on her side, the flame-light
Leaped, and he saw her face puckering with puzzled wonder. "Not all alone? But how can that be?"
She sighed and said, "Oh Leader, don't stray for a while. Dear Saul: can you keep them here on the hill around me
Without my watching? No one else helps me. I'll lie down here on the little grass in the windy sun
And think whether I can live. I have *you,* dear stragglers.

Thoughts come and go back as lightly as deer on the hill,
But as hard to catch. . . . Not *all* alone. Oh.
Not alone at *all.*
Indeed it is even stranger than I thought."

She laughed
and sat up. "Oh sweet warm sun . . .
Are you there, Onorio? But where's the poor old man
Who seemed to be so unhappy? I wish he hadn't gone home,
For now I remember what I ought to tell him. I'm sadly changed
Since that trouble and sickness, and though I'm happy
I hardly ever remember in the nick o' time
What ought to be said. You must tell him
That all our pain comes from restraint of love."
The hail had suddenly hushed, and all her words
Were clear but hurried. "I learned it easily, Onorio,
And never have thought about it again till now. The only wonder's
Not to've known always. The beetle beside my hand in the grass and the little brown bird tilted on a stone,
The short sad grass, burnt on the gable of the world with near sun and all winds: there was nothing there that I didn't
Love with my heart, yes the hill though drunk with dear blood: I looked far over the valley at the patch of oaks
At the head of a field, where Charlie's people had lived (they had moved away) and loved them, although they'd been
Always unfriendly I never thought of it." Then Vasquez, for the first time forgetting the person a moment

To regard the idea: "You were cut off from the natural objects of love, you turned toward others." "Ah," she answered
Eagerly, "I'd always been turned to all others,
And tired my poor strength confining the joy to few. But now I'd no more reason to confine it, I'd nothing
Left to lose nor keep back.— Has the poor old man gone?
He seemed to be truly unhappy.
Wasn't he afraid we'd burn the bridge: we ought surely
To have drowned our fire. I was sick, or I'd have done . . . anything.
But old men are so strange, to want and not want,
And then be angry."

"He has gone," he answered.
"Now, Clare, if you could eat something, then sleep,
To fill the cup for to-morrow."
"I have to tell you the rest.— Why did he go?
Was he angry at me?— Oh, I feel better, Onorio,
But never more open-eyed.

There was one of those great owly hawks
That soar for hours, turning and turning below me along the bottom of the slope: I so loved it
I thought if it were hungry I'd give it my hand for meat.

Then winter came.
Then about Christmas time (because I'd counted the months and remembered Christmas) storm followed storm
Like frightened horses tethered to a tree, around and around. Three men came in the door without knocking,

Wherever they moved, water and black oil ran down.
There'd been a shipwreck. I gave them the house,
then one of them
Found the axe and began chopping firewood, another went
back across wild rain to the fall of the hill
And shouted. He was so big, like a barrel walking, I ran
in his shelter
And saw the great, black, masted thing almost on shore,
lying on its side in the shadow of the hill,
And the flying steam of a fire they'd built on the beach.
All that morning the people came up like ants,
Poor souls they were all so tired and cold, some hurt and
some crying. I'd only," she said, "a few handfuls of
flour
Left in the house." She trembled and lay down. "I can't
remember any more."

Vasquez made up the fire,
And went and drew up the blanket over Clare's shoulder.
He found her shuddering. "Now sleep. Now rest." She
answered:
"They killed a sheep. They were hungry.
I'd grown to love so much the flock that was left.
Our shepherd, I think, had taken them away mostly
While I was kept in Salinas.
I heard her crying when they threw her down, she thought
I could save her.
Her soft white throat.

"That night I crept out in the thin rain at moonrise
And led them so far away, all that were left,
The house and the barn might hold a hundred hungry
mouths
To hunt us all night and day and could never find us.

We hid in oak-woods. There was nothing to eat,
And never any dry place. We walked in the gray rain in
the flowing gorges of canyons that no one
But the hawks have seen, and climbed wet stone and saw
the storms racing below us, but still the thin rain
Sifted through the air as if it fell from the stars. I was
then much stronger
Than ever since then.

A man caught me at last, when I was
too weak to run, and conquered my fear.
He was kind, he promised me not to hurt the poor flock,
But the half of them had been lost, I never could remember
how. He lived alone; I was sick in his cabin
For many days, dreaming that a monkey nursed me: he
looked so funny, he'd a frill of red hair
All around his face.

When I grew better, he wanted to do
like Charlie. I knew what the doctor had said,
But I was ashamed to speak of death: I was often ashamed
in those days: he'd been so kind. Yet terror
Would come and cover my head like a cold wave.
I watched the moon, but at the full moon my fear
Flowed quietly away in the night.

"The spring and summer were full of pleasure and
happiness.
I'd no more fear of my friend, but we met seldom. I went
in freedom
From mountain to mountain, wherever good pasture grew,
Watching the creeks grow quiet and color themselves
With cool green moss, and the green hills turn white.
The people at the few farms all knew me, and now

Their minds changed; they were kind. All the deer knew me;
They'd walk in my flock.

In the midst of summer,
When the moon filled my blood failed to be moved,
The life that will make death began in my body.
I'd seen that moon when it was little as a chip
Over my left shoulder, from Palos ridge
By a purple cloud.

X

"Oh, not till April," she said.
"All's quiet now, the bitterness is past, I have made peace
With death except in my dreams, those can't be ruled. But then, when I first
Began to believe and knew it had happened . . . I felt badly. I went back to my father's house,
Much was broken and chopped down, but I found
Little things that I'd loved when I was a child, hidden in corners. When I was drunk with crying
We hurried away. The lambs never seemed able to live, the mothers were glad to give me their milk,
We hid in the secret hills till it seemed desolate to die there.— Tell me, Onorio,
What month is this?"

He answered, "Clare, Clare, fear nothing.
Death is as far away from you as from any one.
There was a girl (I've heard my brothers talking:
The road-overseer's daughter) was four or five months along

And went to a doctor: she had no trouble:
She's like a virgin again." Clare struck the earth with her hands
And raised her body, she stared through the red of the fire
With brilliant confused eyes. "Your face was like a devil's in the steamy glimmer:
But only because you don't understand. Why, Tia Livia herself . . .you are too innocent, Onorio,
Has done so . . . but women often have small round stones
Instead of hearts." "But," he answered, "if you're not able to bear it. Not even a priest would bid you die
For a child that couldn't be born alive. You've lived too much alone, bodiless fears have become
Giants in secret. I too am not able to think clearly to-night, in the stinging drift of the fire
And the strange place, to-morrow I'll tell you plainly. My mind is confused
As I have sometimes felt it before the clouds of the world
Were opened: but I know: for disease to refuse cure
Is self-murder, not virtue." She squatted upright,
Wrapping the coat about her shoulders and knees,
And said, "Have you never seen in your visions
The golden country that our souls came from,
Before we looked at the moon and stars and knew
They are not perfect? We came from a purer peace
In a more perfect heaven; where there was nothing
But calm delight, no cold, no sickness, no sharp hail,
The haven of neither hunger nor sorrow,
But all-enfolding love and unchangeable joy
Near the heart of life." Vasquez turned from the fire
And stared at her lit face. "How did you learn
This wonder? It is true." "I remembered it,"
She answered, "when I was in trouble." "This is the bitter-sweet memory,"

He said, "that makes the breast of the earth bitter
After we are born and the dear sun ridiculous. We shall return there, we homesick."
"No," she answered. "The place was my mother's body before I was born. You may remember it a little but I've
Remembered plainly: and the wailing pain of entering this air. I've thought and thought and remembered. I found
A cave in a high cliff of white stone, when I was hiding from people: it was there I had the first memory.
There I'd have stayed in the safe darkness forever; the sheep were hungry and strayed out, so I couldn't stay.
I remembered again when I went home to our house and the door hung crazy
On a snapped hinge. You don't believe me, Onorio,
But after while you'll remember plainly, if some long trouble
Makes you want peace; or being handled has broken your shame. I have no shame now." He answered nothing
Because she seemed to speak from a frantic mind.
After a moment, "No matter," she said. "When I was in my worst trouble
I knew that the child was feeding on peace and happiness. I had happiness here in my body. It is not mine,
But I am its world and the sky around it, its loving God. It is having the prime and perfect of life,
The nine months that are better than the ninety years. I'd not steal one of its days to save my life.
I am like its God, how could I betray it? It has not moved yet
But feels its blessedness in its quietness; but soon I shall feel it move, Tia Livia said it will nestle

Down the warm nest and flutter like a winged creature. It
shook her body, she said." But Vasquez, loathing
To hear these things, labored with the sick fire
In the steam of the wet wood, not listening, then Clare
Sighed and lay down. He heard her in a moment
Miserably sobbing, he went and touched her. "What is it?
Clare? Clare?" "Ai, when will morning come?
It is horrible to lie still," she said, "feeling
The black of April . . . it's nothing, it's nothing . . .
like a cat
Tick tick on padded feet. Ah let me alone, will you?
Lying quiet does it: I'll have courage in my time."

A little later she asked for food, she ate,
And drank from the stream, and slept. She moved
in her sleep
And tossed her arms, Vasquez would cover them again,
But the fever seemed quieted. He crossed the stream by
the stones in the dull fire-glimmer
And fetched armfuls of flood-wood from under the oppo-
site bridge-head. The fire revived; the earth turned
past midnight;
Far eastward beyond the coasts of the continent morning
troubled the Atlantic.

XI

Vasquez crouched by the fire
And felt one of those revelations that were in his own
regard the jewels and value of his life
Approach and begin. First passed — as always
Since Barclay was gone, whom he had taken for incarnate
God — ancestral forms against the white cloud,

The high dark heads of Indian migrations, going south
along the coast, drawn down from the hungry straits
and from Asia,
The heads like worn coins and the high shoulders,
The brown-lipped patient mouths below vulture beaks, and
burnished fall of black hair over slant foreheads,
Going up to the Mayan and the Aztec mountains, and
sowing the coast. They swept the way and the cloud
cleared,
The vision would come: came instead a strong pause.

A part
of his mind
Wished to remember what the rest had forgotten,
And groping for it in the dark withstood the prepared
Pageant of dreams. He'd read in his curious boyhood
Of the child the mother is found incapable of bearing
Cut from the mother's belly. Both live: the wound
Heals: it was called the Cæsarean section. But he, fearing
Whatever thought might threaten to infringe his careful
Chastity of mind, had quickly canceled the memory;
That now sought a new birth; it might save Clare
If he could think of it.

That revived part
Made itself into the vision, all to no purpose,
His precious dreams were never to the point of life.
Only the imperial name, and the world's
Two-thousand-year and ten-thousand-miles-traveled
Cæsarean memory appeared. He imagined at first that
the voice
Cried "Ave Maria," but it cried "Ave Cæsar."

He saw the
firelight-gilded

Timbers of the bridge above; and one of the ewes lifted
her head in the light beside Clare sleeping;
The smoke gathered its cloud into a floating globe and
these were forgotten. On the globe of the earth
The aquiline-headed Roman, who summed in his one per-
son the powers and ordered science of humanity,
Stood and possessed his orb of empire, and looked at the
stars. Then the voice cried
"The pride of the earth."

But Vasquez laughed aloud, for
the earth was a grain of dust circling the fire,
And the fire itself but a spark, among innumerable sparks.
The swarm of the points of light drifting
No path down darkness merged its pin-prick eyelets into
one misty glimmer, a mill-stone in shape,
A coin in shape, a mere coin, a flipped luckpenny: but
again Vasquez
Laughed out, for who was the spendthrift sowed them all
over the sky, indistinguishable innumerable
Fish-scales of light? They drew together as they drifted
away no path down the wild darkness; he saw
The webs of their rays made them one tissue, their rays
that were their very substance and power filled wholly
The space they were in, so that each one touched all, there
was no division between them, no emptiness, and each
Changed substance with all the others and became the
others. It was dreadful to see
No space between them, no cave of peace nor no night of
quietness, no blind spot nor no deaf heart, but the
tides
Of power and substance flood every cranny; no annihi-
lation, no escape but change: it must endure itself

Forever. It has the strength to endure itself. We others,
being faintly made of the dust of a grain of dust
Have been permitted to fool our patience asleep by invent-
ing death. A poor comfort, he thought,
Yet better than none, the imaginary cavern, how we all
come clamoring
To the gates of our great invention after few years.
Though a cheat, it works.

The speckled tissue of universes
Drew into one formed and rounded light, and Vasquez
Worshiped the one light. One eye . . . what, an eye?
A dark mountain with an eye in its cliff? A coal-black
stallion
Eyed with one burning eye in the mid brow?
Night has an eye. The poor little vision-seer
Groaned, that he never had wit to understand visions.
See all and know nothing. The eye that makes its own light
And sees nothing but itself. "I am seeing Barclay again,"
He marveled, as who should say "I am seeing God:
But what is God?" He continued gazing,
And beads of sweat spilled from his forehead into
the fire-edge
Ashes. He saw at last, neither the eyed mountain
Nor the stallion, nor Barclay, but his own eye
In the darkness of his own face.

The circuit was closed:
"I can endure all things," he thought, "forever. I am he
Whom I have sought.

And Clare loves all things
Because all things are herself. She has killed her father
And inherited. Her old enormous father

Who rode the furrows full tilt, sowing with both hands
The high field above the hills and the ocean. We kill steers
for meat, and God
To be atoned with him. But I remain from myself divided,
gazing beyond the flaming walls,
Not fortunate enough, and too faint-hearted."

He continued
gazing across the wane of the fire at the dark
Vision of his own face turned sideways, the light of one
eye. Clare turned in her place and awoke and said,
"How awfully little. Ooh, Ooh," in a dove's voice,
And then, "I forgot I wasn't alone, Onorio:
And here are the sheep. Have I slept a moment?
I did have a strange dream. I went out across the starlight
Knocking through flight after flight of the shiny balls
And got so far away that the sun and the great earth
And beautiful moon and all the stars were blended
Into one tiny light, Oh terribly little,
The flame of a pitiful little candle blown over
In the wind of darkness, in the fear of the night. It was
so tiny
I wanted to be its comfort
And hold it and rock it on my breast. One wee flicker
In all the wild dark. What a dream." She turned anxiously
To touch the sheep, fondling their heads and naming them.
"Dear Fay, dear Fern. And here's Captain Saul. Ah bad
little Hornie
Who taught you to be so bold?" Suddenly she cried
"Did Leader and Frannie go out — did two of the sheep
Go out lately?" But Vasquez, caught in his vision,
Answered "You also have broken
The fire-studded egg of heaven and we're together
In the world outside." "Ah Ah," she cried desolately,

"Did you lie when you counted them? When I was sick
And my eyes failed?" She ran into the darkness outside, calling their names;
The flock that remained stood up, in the edge of firelight, tremulously crying. Then Vasquez: "I hear a multitude
Of people crying, but why do you lament and cry? You particles of eye of light, if some of you
Endure evil, the others endure good, the balance is perfect. The eye lives on mixed light and darkness,
Not either alone. And you are not many but one, the eye is not glad nor sorry, nor the dark face
Disquieted: be quiet, voices, and hear the real voice." Clare Walker came in from the dark with wide strained eyes,
In each iris the fire reflected made a red stain, and she cried:
"Onorio, for Christ's sake tell me, were they not with me?
Or have they slipped out?" He turned slowly an unanswering face
Of cool, dark and deaf stone, tempered to the mood
Of what he imagined . . . or perhaps perceived. And Clare:
"If I have slept and been dreaming while they're in danger
Or die in the dark: and they cried for me
In the dead night, while I slept and ate: I hope that all the miseries I ever feared for myself
Will come doubled, the rain on my hair be knives of ice, the sun whips of fire, the death I must die
Drawn out and dreadful like the dream of hell: Onorio, Oh come,
Help me to find them!" He rose, passively under command in the shrill of her voice, muttering: "I can't
Imagine what further's to find: yet I'll go along.
Is there another light or another darkness?"

"Oh," she answered, "it's black," and snatched the most
eager brands
Out of the fire for a torch. He with deft fingers
Mimicking her act, but with a sleepwalker mindlessness,
Bound fire into a bundle of sallow twigs,
And calmly, twirling his torch to flame, followed
The red glow of her rod-ends. They ran on the bridge and
wandered
Up the wet road, Clare calling her flock around her
And sobbing the names of the lost. The useless torches
Flared in the puddles and ruts of water, and ruddied
The plump backs of the sheep; so sanguine-outlined
The little ridiculous procession strayed up the road
In the lane of the trees, the great-trunked wood like storms
Of darkness on either hand. The torches died soon,
Then Clare stood still, desolately calling; weak dawn
Had washed all the world gray.

The heads of the little flock
Suddenly and all together were turned one way, then a
limping ewe
Came out of the wood. Clare screamed with joy, and ran
and dropped on her knees to embrace the lean neck.
"Oh Leader!
Leader! She's safe, Onorio. Oh Leader where's Frannie?"
But then the wound was discovered, the flap torn back
Red from the flank and hanging from the rump, and the
blood-caked wool. Clare moaned awhile with no words,
and said,
"When I forgot you because I was sick, when I forgot to
call you and count you in the rain in the night:
I wish I had died. I have nothing but these,
Onorio, to take care of, and lose and lose. She used to go
first always, I called her Leader:

And now she's hurt." Onorio heard Clare's teeth clacking
together in the thin cheeks, and her breath
Hissing between them, he answered calmly, still caught in
his vision: "The five claws of a lion. Look, Clare.
But don't grieve, the great river of the blood of life is
always bursting its banks, never runs dry,
Secret inexhaustible fountains feed it." She stared at his
face and turned on the forest her desert eyes
And wrung her hands. "Leader is hurt; and Frannie I think
has died."

They searched long; the fourth hour
Of daylight they found the half consumed body. The head
was not mangled, Clare fell beside it
On the wet earth and kissed the half open eyes,
Weeping and self-reproachful, but yet she lamented
Less violently than Vasquez had feared. At length
He said, "If you wish, Clare, I will fetch tools
And bury it here." She answered faintly, "No matter.
She feels nothing to-day, darkness nor light,
Teeth nor the grave. Oh, I loved her well: but now, see,
She's not living any more. Onorio . . . isn't that your name?
What a stately name! . . . this is the one that fed me
with milk
Long after the others were dry, she was like a mother to
me, when I might have starved.
She loved me, I know.
But even the udders are torn. Her name, Onorio, was
Frannie."
She turned and said, "Poor Leader. Can you come now?
Come Fern, come Fay, come Tiny, we have to go on.
Come Saul."

Vasquez begged her to turn again
And stay at his father's place in the canyon

Until she was well. She had to go on, she answered.
And Vasquez: "My father is withered up with old age
but he'd be kind; and my brothers
Would be your brothers. There's pasture for the sheep.
We're only a sort of Indians but we can be kind.
Come, Clare.
The place is pleasant and alone, up the deep canyon,
beside the old quarry and the kilns where they burnt
the lime.
A hundred laborers used to live there, but now the woods
have grown back, the cabins are standing empty,
The roads are gone. I think the old masonry kilns are
beautiful, standing like towers in the deep forest,
But cracked and leaning, and maidenhair fern grows
from the cracks. The creek makes music below. Come,
Clare.
It is deep with peace. When I have to go about and work
on men's farms for wages I long for that place
Like some one thinking of water in deserts. Sometimes we
hear the sea's thunder, far down the deep gorge.
The darkness under the trees in spring is starry with
flowers, with redwood sorrel, colt's foot, wakerobin,
The slender-stemmed pale yellow violets,
And Solomon's seal that makes intense islands of fragrance
in April." "Oh, April," she said trembling,
"How exactly it follows. How could I rest? Ah, no,
Good-by, good-by, Onorio. Poor Leader, I am sure
We can go a little way before dark. Come, Saul, Saul."
She ran a few steps, panting hard.

Vasquez perceived
No hope of staying her: "Then I'll go back to the bridge
And fetch my horse and my coat. I'll not leave you, Clare."
He went slowly, heavy and amazed. His horse

Had broken tether in the night, stung by the hail-stones.
Then Vasquez, still drunken with the dregs of his vision
To fatalist indifference, went hunting the horse
And found it late. He followed Clare the next morning,
But met another vision on the road, that waved
Impatient white hands against his passage, saying
"If I go up to Calvary ten million times: what is that to you?
Let me go up." Vasquez drew rein and sat staring.
He saw beyond the vision in the yellow mud
Prints of bare feet, dibbled about with many
Little crowding hoof-marks; he marveled, feeling no sadness
But lonely thoughts.

XII

Clare Walker had crossed the ridge and gone down
To the mouth of Cawdor's Canyon. Japanese tenants
Now kept the house; short broad-faced men who planted
Lettuces in the garden against the creek-side
And beans on the bill. The barns were vacant, the cattle
Were vanished from the high pastures. The men were friendly,
Clare begged at their hands a little oil to soften
The bandage on Leader's wound; she'd torn her spent dress
In strips to bind it, and went now without clothing
But the long brown cloak.

She went northward, and on a foreland
Found vacant cabins around a ruined saw-mill;

And finding sacks of dry straw with a worn blanket
In one of the cabins, slept well and awoke refreshed
To travel on slowly northward in the glad sunlight
And sparkle of the sea. But the next day was dark,
And one of the wethers died, she never knew why,
She wept and went on.

Near Point Lobos, by a gate
Where Tamar Cauldwell used to lean from her white pony
To swing the bars, the lion-stricken ewe, Leader,
Groaned and lay down and died. Clare met much kindness there;
She was nursed in the house, helpless, for many days,
And the sheep were guarded and fed. The people clothed her
And calmed her wild mind; but she was not willing to tell them
Her griefs nor her cause of fear. They kept her by watchful force
Until she escaped, a great night of moonlight, and fled
With her small flock.

Far up the Carmel Valley
The river became a brook, she watched a salmon
Row its worn body up-stream over the stones
And struck by a thwart current expose the bruised
White belly to the white of the sky, gashed with red wounds, but right itself
And wriggle up-stream, having that within it, spirit or desire,
Will spend all its dear flesh and all the power it has gathered, in the sweet salt pastures and fostering ocean,
To find the appointed high-place and perish. Clare Walker, in a bright moment's passage of anxious feeling,

Knowing nothing of its fate saw her own fate reflected.
She drank, and the sheep drank; they went up the valley
And crossed, the next day, among the long-needled pines, the great thirsty sky-ridge.

In the valley beyond
Clare journeyed northward again, anxiously avoiding
The traveled roads and hiding herself from people
In fear that some one's force or kindness might steal her
From the helpless flock; and later in habitual fear.

She was seen much later, heavily swollen
Toward child-birth, cowering from a thin April rain
By a little fire on the San Joaquin river-bank,
Sharing a camp of outcast men; no sheep
Remained with her, but when she moved in the morning
She called the names of many, Fern, Fay and Leader,
Nosie and Saul and little Hornie and the others,
"Dear Tiny, dear Frannie, come on, we have to go on."
The toothless tramp bandaging his foot by the fire
Looked up with a flicker of light in his slack face,
And the sickly sullen boy on the other side
Smiled without mockery. Clare had gone half a mile
And felt a grinding pang in her back, she clung to the fence
And saw the poplars planted along the road
Reach dreadfully away northward. When the pain ended
She went on northward; but after the second pain
She crept down to the river and hid her body
In a willow thicket. In the evening, between the rapid
Summits of agony before exhaustion, she called
The sheep about her and perceived that none came.

I

REFERENCE TO A PASSAGE IN PLUTARCH'S LIFE OF SULLA

THE people buying and selling, consuming pleasures, talking in the archways,
Were all suddenly struck quiet
And ran from under stone to look up at the sky: so shrill and mournful,
So fierce and final, a brazen
Pealing of trumpets high up in the air, in the summer blue over Tuscany.
They marveled; the soothsayers answered:
"Although the Gods are little troubled toward men, at the end of each period
A sign is declared in heaven
Indicating new times, new customs, a changed people; the Romans
Rule, and Etruria is finished;
A wise mariner will trim the sails to the wind."

I heard yesterday
So shrill and mournful a trumpet-blast,
It was hard to be wise. . . . You must eat change and endure; not be much troubled

For the people; they will have their happiness.
When the republic grows too heavy to endure, then Cæsar
will carry it;
When life grows hateful, there's power . . .

II

TO THE CHILDREN

Power's good; life is not always good but power's good.
So you must think when abundance
Makes pawns of people and all the loaves are one dough.
The steep singleness of passion
Dies; they will say, "What was that?" but the power
triumphs.
Loveliness will live under glass
And beauty will go savage in the secret mountains.
There is beauty in power also.
You children must widen your minds' eyes to take moun-
tains
Instead of faces, and millions
Instead of persons; not to hate life; and massed power
After the lone hawk's dead.

III

That light blood-loving weasel, a tongue of yellow
Fire licking the sides of the gray stones,
Has a more passionate and more pure heart
In the snake-slender flanks than man can imagine;
But he is betrayed by his own courage,
The man who kills him is like a cloud hiding a star.

Then praise the jewel-eyed hawk and the tall blue heron;
The black cormorants that fatten their sea-rock
With shining slime; even that ruiner of anthills
The red-shafted woodpecker flying,
A white star between blood-color wing-clouds,
Across the glades of the wood and the green lakes of shade.

These live their felt natures; they know their norm
And live it to the brim; they understand life.
While men molding themselves to the anthill have choked
Their natures until the souls die in them;
They have sold themselves for toys and protection:
No, but consider awhile: what else? Men sold for toys.

Uneasy and fractional people, having no center
But in the eyes and mouths that surround them,
Having no function but to serve and support
Civilization, the enemy of man,
No wonder they live insanely, and desire
With their tongues, progress; with their eyes, pleasure;
with their hearts, death.

Their ancestors were good hunters, good herdsmen and swordsmen,
But now the world is turned upside down;
The good do evil, the hope's in criminals; in vice
That dissolves the cities and war to destroy them.
Through wars and corruptions the house will fall.
Mourn whom it falls on. Be glad: the house is mined, it will fall.

IV

Rain, hail and brutal sun, the plow in the roots,
The pitiless pruning-iron in the branches,

Strengthen the vines, they are all feeding friends
Or powerless foes until the grapes purple.
But when you have ripened your berries it is time to begin
to perish.

The world sickens with change, rain becomes poison,
The earth is a pit, it is time to perish.
The vines are fey, the very kindness of nature
Corrupts what her cruelty before strengthened.
When you stand on the peak of time it is time to begin to
perish.

Reach down the long morbid roots that forget the plow,
Discover the depths; let the long pale tendrils
Spend all to discover the sky, now nothing is good
But only the steel mirrors of discovery . . .
And the beautiful enormous dawns of time, after we perish.

V

Mourning the broken balance, the hopeless prostration of
the earth
Under men's hands and their minds,
The beautiful places killed like rabbits to make a city,
The spreading fungus, the slime-threads
And spores; my own coast's obscene future: I remember
the farther
Future, and the last man dying
Without succession under the confident eyes of the stars.
It was only a moment's accident,
The race that plagued us; the world resumes the old lonely
immortal
Splendor; from here I can even

Perceive that that snuffed candle had something . . . a fantastic virtue,
A faint and unshapely pathos . . .
So death will flatter them at last: what, even the bald ape's by-shot
Was moderately admirable?

VI

PALINODE

All summer neither rain nor wave washes the cormorants'
Perch, and their droppings have painted it shining white.
If the excrement of fish-eaters makes the brown rock a snow-mountain
At noon, a rose in the morning, a beacon at moonrise
On the black water: it is barely possible that even men's present
Lives are something; their arts and sciences (by moonlight)
Not wholly ridiculous, nor their cities merely an offense.

VII

Under my windows, between the road and the sea-cliff, bitter wild grass
Stands narrowed between the people and the storm.
The ocean winter after winter gnaws at its earth, the wheels and the feet
Summer after summer encroach and destroy.
Stubborn green life, for the cliff-eater I cannot comfort you, ignorant which color,

Gray-blue or pale-green, will please the late stars;
But laugh at the other, your seed shall enjoy wonderful
vengeances and suck
The arteries and walk in triumph on the faces.

BIRTH-DUES

JOY is a trick in the air; pleasure is merely contemptible, the dangled
Carrot the ass follows to market or precipice;
But limitary pain — the rock under the tower and the hewn coping
That takes thunder at the head of the turret —
Terrible and real. Therefore a mindless dervish carving himself
With knives will seem to have conquered the world.

The world's God is treacherous and full of unreason; a torturer, but also
The only foundation and the only fountain.
Who fights him eats his own flesh and perishes of hunger; who hides in the grave
To escape him is dead; who enters the Indian
Recession to escape him is dead; who falls in love with the God is washed clean
Of death desired and of death dreaded.

He has joy, but joy is a trick in the air; and pleasure, but pleasure is contemptible;
And peace; and is based on solider than pain.
He has broken boundaries a little and that will estrange him; he is monstrous, but not
To the measure of the God. . . . But I having told you —
However I suppose that few in the world have energy to hear effectively —
Have paid my birth-dues; am quits with the people.

NOT like a beast borne on the flood of passion, boat without oars, but mindful of all his dignity
As human being, a king and a Greek, King Pentheus: "Tell him that we will reverence the Gods we have,
But not minded to increase the burden. What new ones ship raging like beasts from Asia by the islands
We've whips for, here in Thebes. Tell him to take his magic-drunken women and be off." The messenger
Went up to the mountain wood; needles of pine stuck in the sandal-straps of the man returning
At noon and saying: "He could not hear me, O King. I shouted aloud, clothed in the king's authority,
Showing him the wand I carried: the God's . . . I say the stranger's . . . eyes like blue ice looked through my body
As if I had been an open window in the breast of a wall. He bored through me toward Thebes and answered
Not me, the raging laughing women: 'They have Isemenus to drink of, and Dirce, and all the fountains,
Must they have wine too?' What more he said, my lord, I cannot remember. But I, having seen more
Than I dare tell, turned home." "Ten spearmen," the king answered, biting the bearded lip, "will do it.
What more saw you? Dread not to tell, obscene or magic. We are master of ourself as of this people.
Not like a beast borne on the flood of passion, boat without oars, but mindful of all our dignity
As human being, a king and a Greek: no random lightning of anger will stab the messenger. We're sane still

Though the air swarms." The messenger: "My lord, my lord . . ." And the king: "Out with it." "The lady Agave, my lord."

"Our mother," the king answered frowning. "— Was in the mountain with the other women, dancing, adoring."

King Pentheus' knuckles, of the hand that held the long

Smooth-shaven staff tipped with the head of a man carved in pale ivory, whitened, and the hand reddened

Under the scant stipple of black hair. More than that was no motion. "Well, she was in the mountain,"

He answered, "My mother was there," the king housing his wrath in hard self-mastery. He had the chariot

Horsed, and rode swiftly toward Cythaeron; the glens and the slope bristled with forest. In a glade he found them.

He had come alone; the charioteer stayed by the sweating horses. Without awe, without pleasure,

As a man spies on noxious beasts, he standing hidden spied on the rabid choir of the God.

They had pine-cone-tipped wands, they went half naked, they were hoarse with insane song; foam from their mouths, mingled

With wine and sweat, ran down their bodies. O fools, boats without oars borne on the flood of passion,

Forgetting utterly all the dignity of man, the pride of the only self-commanding animal,

That captains his own soul and controls even

Fate, for a space. The only animal that turns means to an end. "What end? Oh, but what end?"

It cried under his mind, "Increase the city? subdue the earth? Breed slaves and cattle, and one's own

Off-shots, fed and secure? Ah fruitful-fruitless

Generations forever and ever. . . . For pleasure"— he spat on the earth —"the slight collectible pleasure

Surplus to pain?" Then recollecting all his dignity as human being, a king and a Greek,
He heard with hostile ears the hoarse and beastlike choir of the worshipers: "O sisters, we have found an opening,
We have hewn in the stone and mortar
A wild strait gateway,
Slit eyes in the mask, sisters,
Entered the mountain.
We shall be sad to-morrow when the wine dies,
The God dies from our blood;
To-day in the forest
We are fire and have found an opening."
His own mother Agave singing. Endure a little. If one could understand their fountain
Of madness. Her shame to-morrow: not punishment enough: prison in the house. "O sisters, we have found an opening:"
What opening?

The boys from Thebes to be whipped, the Theban women shut up a fortnight, the God and his Thracian
Satyrs and women . . . "The generations," he thought suddenly, "aspire. They better; they climb; as I
Am better than this weak suggestible woman my mother. Had I forgotten a moment the end
Of being? To increase the power, collectedness and dignity of man.— A more collected and dignified
Creature," he groaned, "to die and stink."

That moment like a tall ship breasting through water the God

Passed, the high head, the shining hair and the blond
shoulders, trailing a wake of ecstasy like foam
Across the multitude of faces like waves, his frantic wor-
shipers. He anchored among them smiling
In the wild midst, and said softly: "When you are dead
you become part of peace; let no man
Dream more of death; there is neither sight nor hearing
nor any wonder; none of us Gods enters it.
You become part of peace, part of the sacred beauty, but
having no part: as if a flute-player
Should make beauty but hear none, being deaf and sense-
less. But living if you will
It is possible for you to break prison of yourselves and
enter the nature of things and use the beauty.
Wine and lawlessness, art and music, love, self-torture,
religion,
Are means but are not needful, contemplation will do it.
Only to break human collectedness.
The least shepherd on Cythaeron, if he dares, might do it.
But you being neophyte all, Thracians and Thebans,
Are indeed somewhat wild, somewhat too drunken."

King Pentheus then, seeing
his enemy, but ever
Stately mindful of all his dignity, as human being, a king
and a Greek, entered among them
Angrily to fetch his mother. Agave cried out,
"Sisters: a lion stalking us, a wild beast of the pinewood,
or is it a wolf?" She leading eagerly,
Full of the courage that the God had taught them, rushed
on her son not known, and the others raging
Joined her; the frantic voices, the tearing fingers, the teeth
and the madness . . .

The God and his people went down
Toward Thebes, Agave dancing before them, the head of her son the triumph in her hands, the beard and the blood:
"A lion I have killed in the mountain,
Thebans, the head of a lion my own hands hunted,
With my hands, a lion!"

EVENING EBB

THE ocean has not been so quiet for a long while; five
night-herons
Fly shorelong voiceless in the hush of the air
Over the calm of an ebb that almost mirrors their wings.
The sun has gone down, and the water has gone down
From the weed-clad rock, but the distant cloud-wall rises.
The ebb whispers.
Great cloud-shadows float in the opal water.
Through rifts in the screen of the world pale gold gleams,
and the evening
Star suddenly glides like a flying torch.
As if we had not been meant to see her; rehearsing behind
The screen of the world for another audience.

HANDS

INSIDE a cave in a narrow canyon near Tassajara
The vault of rock is painted with hands,
A multitude of hands in the twilight, a cloud of men's palms, no more,
No other picture. There's no one to say
Whether the brown shy quiet people who are dead intended
Religion or magic, or made their tracings
In the idleness of art; but over the division of years these careful
Signs-manual are now like a sealed message
Saying: "Look: we also were human; we had hands, not paws. All hail
You people with the cleverer hands, our supplanters
In the beautiful country; enjoy her a season, her beauty, and come down
And be supplanted; for you also are human."

HOODED NIGHT

AT night, toward dawn, all the lights of the shore have
died,
And a wind moves. Moves in the dark
The sleeping power of the ocean, no more beastlike than
manlike,
Not to be compared; itself and itself.
Its breath blown shoreward huddles the world with a fog;
no stars
Dance in heaven; no ship's light glances.
I see the heavy granite bodies of the rocks of the headland,
That were ancient here before Egypt had pyramids,
Bulk on the gray of the sky, and beyond them the jets of
young trees
I planted the year of the Versailles peace.
But here is the final unridiculous peace. Before the first
man
Here were the stones, the ocean, the cypresses,
And the pallid region in the stone-rough dome of fog where
the moon
Falls on the west. Here is reality.
The other is a spectral episode: after the inquisitive
animal's
Amusements are quiet: the dark glory.